Practical Sermons

By the late REVEREND

Mr. DANIEL WILCOX,

PREACHER of the Gospel in Monks-Well-Street, London.

Printed at the earnest Desire of the Congre-GATION, and others that were his Occasional Hearers.

To which are added,

The CONFESSION of FAITH delivered at his Ordination to the Ministry; and a DISCOURSE on the Duty of holding fast the Form of found Words.

In THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

The THIRD EDITION, Corrected:

He being dead, yet Speaketh. HEB. xi. 4.

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PREFACE.

HE Reader may be affured that the following Discourses are the genuine Works of the late Reverend Author whose Name they. bear; tho' never defign'd by him to be made public. They are printed (from his own Notes, which were for that Purpose carefully perused by several worthy Ministers) at the earnest Request of his Congregation, and others, that were his occasional Hearers, who are very desirous that he, tho' dead, may yet speak to them; and that they may have an Opportunity to read, in their Families and Closets, some of those Sermons which they heard with much Delight from the Pulpit.

They will be found to labour under the Disadvantages usually attending Posthumous Pieces, not design'd by their Authors for the Press; which, however, it is hoped, will be excused by such as pe-

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The PREFACE.

ruse them with a serious Turn of Mind, and desire to be prosited rather than

pleased.

They seem, indeed, to be calculated for spiritual Edissication; as the subject Matter of them is the great, important Truths of the Gospel, the things belonging to the Soul's eternal Peace; and the Manner in which they are handled is

plain, engaging, and affecting.

That the same divine Blessing, which there is Reason to believe attended the Preaching of these Sermons, may be graciously vouchsafed in the Reading of them; that Sinners may thereby be converted from the Error of their Ways, Saints be built up in their most holy Faith, and have a growing Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light,

Are the hearty Desires of the Persons at whose Request the same are now published.

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PSALM XXXI. 4, 5.

For thou art my Strength. Into thine hand I commit my Spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.

HESE are the words of holy David: one born from heaven, and hoping if the almost desperate dangers he was now in should bring him down to death, as they threatned to do, he should be taken up thither by his merciful God. And as referring these words to this view, we may take notice of these two things.

I. Of the becoming frame and sense of spirit David now discovered when reduced to such straits by his deadly enemies, that his last change was in his view, as at hand and unavoidable; unless God by some extraordinary appearance for him in his providence, prevented it.

This was the last Sermon of the author, and delivered but three days before his sudden Death.

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1. He

i. He had a just apprehension that dying was difficult work, and that he needed great help to go thro' it well. And as none but God could either deliver him from death at this time, when to all human appearance it was to be his lot; or assist him with patience and comfort to suffer it, he looks up to him as his strength, to concern himself on his behalf: for thou art my strength.

2. He expressed a serious concern for the safety of his soul, his nobler part particularly, as that which he knew was to survive the body, and be removed at his death into an endless state. And he shewed his concern for it, by committing it into the hand of God, as the best thing he could do for it. Looking up, he thus speaks to that God to whom he was going, into

thine hand I commit my spirit.

My undying part is the greatest trust in all the world, and I have none to lodge it withal with safety and satisfaction, but with thee the living God. None can be to me, and do for me, what thou my God canst be and do: and, as I need look no further, so if thou wilt receive it, I can desire no more.——Into thine band I commit my spirit. This is the becoming frame he discovers.

II. We have the grounds on which his faith and comfort rested, when he thus commended his soul to God. These were two, viz.

(1.) God's right and interest in him, and upon the most endearing foundation to his saints, for thou hast redeemed me.

(2.) God's

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(2.) God's known unchangeable faithfulness, which is implied in the title under which he addressed unto him, O Lord God of truth.

What I defign from the whole, will come un-

der the three following Observations, viz.

I. Dying, in a faint's account, is a difficult work.

II. The children of God, when confidering themselves as dying, are chiefly concerned for

their departing immortal spirits.

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III. Such having chosen God for their God, have abundant encouragement when dying, to commit their departing spirits into his hand, with hopes of their being safe and happy for ever with him.

I. Dying in a faint's account is a difficult work.

Whoever make light of dying, believers see reason to think and speak of it with the greatest seriousness, as that to which more than ordinary strength is necessary: such as they can no where expect, but in God, and from him.

(1.) To die is always difficult in itself.

(2.) There are circumstances that may increase the difficulty of dying.

(1.) To die in itself considered, may well be

faid to be an awful and difficult work.

It is so upon several accounts.

1. As it is a work untried: fuch as none of the living have experienced, and none that have gone through the dark and gloomy valley before them, are allowed to return to tell them what it is. We cannot know but by dying, what it is to

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die.

die. Job calls it a change, such a one as he was waiting for, but had not yet gone through. He had known what it was to change from prosperity to affliction, from honour to reproach, from ease to pain; but he knew not what it was to

change from life to death.

This is the way of all flesh, the way of all the earth. The living know that they must die; but how much more will they know, when they have actually taken their own turn, and are joined to the dead? How imperfect shall we find our conceptions of death from the most lively representations of it before-hand, or even the nearest approaches to it, in comparison of what we shall know of it after we are come to die indeed? To die, is a work the living have not tried; which is the first, but not the only

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thing that fpeaks it difficult.

2. To die is difficult, as it is a final farewel to the present world, and all things in it that would invite our stay, or render it desireable. Earthly accommodations, and earthly comforts; the places of our abode, imployment and delight, are to know us no more, as we are to know them no more. As we came forth of our mother's womb, naked shall we return, to go as we came, and shall take nothing of our labour, which we may carry away in our hand, Ecclef. v. 15. The things of the world that we have most admired and loved, must be left behind, and a feparation made between the most endeared relations, as parents and children, brother and fifter, husband and wife. And to carnal finners who

who feek and place their happiness upon earth, without looking after any higher good, this is unwelcome news, especially when in easy and prosperous circumstances. And even saints themselves are apt to be too much pleased with the present world, which makes afflictions and sufferings so necessary to the best, to help to wean them from it, by sensibly telling them, that

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And inordinate affection to near and dear relations, is one of the fins most common among those that are spiritually renewed, and the most difficultly cured. . Nature teaches us to love those that are flesh of our flesh; and bone of our bone, and Grace does farther incline us to it while kept within due bounds: but fuch is our folly, that herein we hardly know any bounds. We open the flood-gates, and pour out our tears in full stream, and are apt to think we do well, even when we exceed; fo that a feparation can't be made of us from them, without a great deal of pain. When we come to die, and are dead to all things else, 'tis difficult to die to those that love us, and whom we feel we love almost as our own fouls. At putting off from the shoar of this world, and launching forth into eternity, how often and eagerly do we look back upon them, as willing to take another, and another view of them, till death clofes our eyes, and fnatches us away from beholding man any more with the inhabitants of the world? Isa. xxxviii. How much soever the world, or any persons or things in it may be B 3 loved

loved by us, at death all must be left: lover and friend must be put far from each other, and we must go into darkness. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry

nothing out.

And the creature enjoyments are empty and unfatisfactory, yet to be gone from them, no more to return while the present frame of this world that contains them endures; to be removed from a state we are so well acquainted with, to be no more concerned in any thing relating to it; and to bear this with a composure and submission becoming Christians, is a difficulty in dying, that plainly speaks our need of

strength from heaven.

3. To die, is to put off or lay down the body, no more to be re-affumed, till the general refurrection at the end of the world. Now the body is a part of ourselves, and such a part as the Author of our natures has implanted in the foul a very great love and tenderness for. 'Tis that part of ourselves that we are best acquainted with, tho' 'tis matter of lamentation that it should be so: but 'tis plain we have in a sad degree loft the knowledge of our better part, the foul; we know very little of the nature of a spiritual substance, but are better acquainted with our bodies; we feel their wants and grievances. We that are in this earthly tabernacle do groan, being burden'd; and can't but be concerned when they are about to be diffolved and taken down.

The body is that part of ourselves which

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we are apt to be too fond of, imploy too much care and coft, time and thought about: and in this, the concern of most goes so far, as makes the thoughts of death the harder to be borne by them. But how near or dear foever the body is, the dislodging foul must part with it; and after all its care to support, uphold, gratify and please it, yield it up to be a feast for worms. This is a farther addition to the difficulty of dying.

While we live the foul inhabits the body, and acts in and by it; but death diffolves the union, and fo turns the body into a dead corps, fit for

nothing but to be buried out of fight.

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The body is a curious piece wonderfully made, and exquifitely wrought; but death mars its beauty, stains its glory, and turns it into rottenness. And what grace does it require to look down into the grave, and fay to corruption, thou art my father? At death, the dust returns to

the earth as it was, Eccles. xii. 7.

4. Death puts an end to a state of probation, which makes a dying work of the greatest importance. We are fent into this world, to prepare for another. As long as the foul is bolden in life, our time of preparation continues; but immediately concludes with our last breath, after which, it is no more to be renewed and allowed us again for ever. Life on earth is given to the end of working out our falvation, fleeing from the wrath to come, and making fure of heaven and everlasting life: but if our days run out before our work is finished, no more space of repentance

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pentance is to be allowed. When the thread of life is cut, all opportunities and helps for eterni-

ty cease with it.

Our life on earth is appointed us to dispatch the work on which our everlasting life depends, and we are to have but one such life. What is to be done for eternity, must be done in this present one, or not at all. Now we may hear, and read, and learn, and pray; but when this Life is ended, no more opportunities are to be allowed for any of these. We are indeed to rise from the dead, and be called to judgment; but that is for what we have already done in the body: we shall not be permitted to live in it again upon earth, to prepare for eternity by correcting the faults of our former life.

Now while this present life lasteth, if we are not at present converted and brought home to God, we may be; the carnal may be renewed, the guilty obtain repentance and pardon; such as are afar off may be brought home, and from a state of nature translated into the kingdom of God's dear son: but when death has taken down our glass, and removed us into eternity,

nothing of this can be faid.

Had such as have outstood their day, and are snatched away unready, any prospect of a new trial, how earnestly would they cry to God, O put us once more into a state of probation, such as we once had, but too foolishly lost: once more let us hear the joyful sound inviting us to turn and live, to sly for resuge to Christ, as able and willing to save us, &c. O for the invaluable mercies

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mercies of the life we once had! O let us once more be favour'd with it, and with the word, ordinances, and strivings of thy spirit! and try if we would not make a better use of them than we formerly did.

But this cannot be: It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment; in which they are to be unalterably fixt in happiness or misery, according to the state in which they were found when summon'd away. Under this view, how awful a thing is it to die?

5. To die is a great and difficult work, seeing thereupon the soul removes into a new state and world. To remove from one kingdom or country to another, is a great thing; but how much greater to remove into a new world? a world we have not seen, and are little acquainted with.

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We know what this world is, but we know very little of the other. Here we have had our birth and education, here we have convers'd all our days; but who among the living have had a view of that world that lies beyond death? Life and immortality are indeed brought to light by the gospel, in a clearer manner than ever before; but after the most that is revealed to us of eternity, 'tis but little that we can take in. Now to leave a world which we know, and launch out into one that we know not, may well be esteem'd and spoken of as a difficult thing.

'Tis recorded as a noble instance of the faith of Abraham, that when he was called to leave his native country, and his father's house, to go

inte

into a strange land, which he should receive for an inheritance, he obeyed, not knowing whither he went. And it requires a very strong faith in a saint, willingly and with ready consent to yield up the soul to depart into another world at God's call, who may still hope for his share of comfort in this world.

6. To die is a difficult work, as upon dying the departing foul has to do with God as a judge, who will order it to its unchangeable state and place in the future eternal world. The body returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God that gave it. Saints have to do with God while they live; but in how much nearer, and more awful a manner, will they have to do with him, when they are brought into the light of his immediate presence after they die?

After death, the state is soon known and entered upon, wherein every one is determined to abide for eternity. And how important is the case, for a departing soul to consider with itself, I am just now going into that state in which I must abide without possibility of change? And as there are two, and but two, states in the eternal world, with what concern must I launch out into that boundless ocean, where I must presently know by experience, what eternal

happiness or eternal misery means?

Thus to die is always difficult in itself.

2. There are circumstances that may add to the difficulty of dying.

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(1.) When death may find us in the dark as to our title to the life to come, or meetness for it. This will make the heart of the stoutest finner upon earth to fail. A poor malefactor going to execution under visible agony and confusion, was ask'd by one of his finful companions, What, man, are you afraid of death? he anfwer'd, no, fir, I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of that which lies beyond death; as after death comes the judgment. And the best of God's children have not always good hope in themselves, that they shall stand in judgment, own'd and accepted of God, and be call'd up to dwell with him in heaven. They know they shall then have to do with a most impartial judge, the heart-fearching God, one that respecteth not persons, nor taketh rewards. And how hard a thing must it be to approach his great tribunal, to be tried for eternity, while not knowing what the event will be? under doubts and fears about their spiritual state when going to the bar of God, no wonder that they are ready to be overwhelm'd.

(2.) Conscience may be filled with terror under the sense of sin, and dread of deserved wrath. Sin, unpardon'd fin, is the sting of death, as drawing after it an everlasting hell; and the very suspicion of this is enough to make the

heart to tremble.

At that day, the foul has usually a more clear and lively sense of the sin, both of nature and practice, than it had before. The fountains of

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the great deep are then opened, and the departing foul has the clearest views of the corruption derived from man's original apostasy; and in how many instances that corruption has broken out.

Conscience may be then thoroughly awaken'd, and fet the fins even of good men in order before them: Sins committed long ago, that had been forgotten, are now called over again, and presented to the soul with their great and heinous aggravations. And no wonder if a fense of these sometimes leads a faint to cry out with the Pfalmist, Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me, Pfal. xxxviii. 4. and, Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, fo that I am not able to look up; they are more than the bairs of my head, therefore my beart faileth me, Pfal. xl. 12.

When God bid Aaron to go up into mount Hor, and Moses into mount Nebo, and die there, he at the same time tells them of their rebellion against him. And how often in their last moments, has he fet home upon his people a lively fense of their past transgressions? An eminent minister was used to tell his hearers, that for his own part, were it not for his hopes in the righteousness of Christ, he did verily believe the thoughts of death would make him grow difracted. And indeed nothing can bear up our spirits in that day, if we are not led to that rock which is higher than ourselves, Pfalm lxi. 2.

Nothing exclusive of that can do it.

(3.) God

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ha be (3.) God in our last moments may hide himself, or withdraw the light of his countenance;
and what distress follows upon this, none can
tell but those that have felt it, as having received
the sentence of death in themselves; and whilst
they felt themselves dying, were fill'd with dismal apprehensions of sinking into the place of
torment. It is no wonder that such circumstances make dying work peculiarly hard.

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II. The children of God confidering themfelves as dying, are chiefly concern'd about their immortal fouls.

The Pfalmist here was so; he had pray'd for temporal salvation in the words of this Psalm before my text, but did not insist mainly upon it. However it was as to his body, his great care was with reference to his soul; O Lord, into thy hand I commit my spirit: let that be safe, and I shall be satisfied.

1. Holy fouls must dislodge by dying, as well as others: the earthly tabernacle must be dislov'd, and the spirit slee away, as from an untenantable habitation. Saints live in expectation of this, and 'tis their great care to prepare for it.

2. This is a great instance of the care that aints have for their departing souls, they look off from the creature to God, and seek their afety and happiness in him. God's saints are not unconcern'd about their bodies, but give hem up with saith to the grave: but they know hat the soul is vastly more precious, and if this be safe and received to heaven, the body shall

not be always left in the grave. The trust of the foul is too great to be committed to any meer creature, and therefore they look above and beyond them all, to God alone. As to this part, the Psalmist speaks the sense of every child of God. Psalm lxii. 5. My soul wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. In his favour their life is bound up in this world; and in the enjoyment of him, they expect their heaven in the next.

But this brings to the

III. Thing, viz. That the faints having chosen God for their God, have abundant encouragement when dying, to commit their souls into his hand, with lively hopes of their being safe and happy for ever with him.

Here I might confider

1. What is imply'd in committing their fouls into the hand of God.

2. For what they are to commit their fouls to him.

3. What encouragement they have to do fo, with lively hopes of his gracious reception, and making them happy for ever.

1. What is imply'd in committing their spi-

rits into the hand of God?

In this is imply'd, 1. That the rest and happiness of immortal souls, is only to be sound in God. With this sense they every one close with him, when coming into the kingdom of grace, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee? Psal. lxxiii. 25. Thus they all maintain their

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communion with him thro' this world, It is good for me to draw near to God. And with the same temper would they go off at death, saying with the Psalmist, Into thine hand I commit my birit. While they are here, their best consolations are from God; and when they remove, heir fullest joy is expected in the enjoyment of him.

2. It implies a reviving perswasion that God is become the God of peace to them, as having received satisfaction for them by Jesus Christ. Without this there could be no approaching to him, or hope of acceptance with him for fallen man; for our committing of our spirits into the hand of God, is a privilege Christ hath purchased for us, having made peace by the blood of his cross.

3. It implies a making use of Christ as the way to the Father. God is in Christ reconciling us to himself: and when we commit our souls into the hands of the Father, we do it by the appointed Mediator. He opens the passage between God and us, which sin had shut up, and ever lives to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Thus Stephen when the dying pray'd, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. Ind by Jesus, all that believe are to commit their spirits into the hands of his Father and theirs.

2. For what are the faints to commit their irits into the hands of God by Jesus Christ?

1. That they may be fafe; i. e. preserv'd in their

their passage to heaven, from all the enemies and dangers that may stand in the way. When saints die, the powers of darkness would doubtless, if possible, hinder the ascending of their souls to God. As they are cast out of heaven, they are fill'd with rage to see any out of our

world going thither.

One thing therefore which the faint means in committing his spirit into the hands of God, is, that the precious depositum may be kept from all that wish or would attempt its ruin. And they are fure that almighty power belongs to God: and if this is engag'd for their preservation, none can pluck them out of his hand. The Redeemer hath spoil'd principalities and powers, and prov'd it by his triumphant ascension to glory: and hath all his and the believers enemies in a chain, so that they shall be more than conquerors in and thro' him. Angels, for order fake, are fent forth to minister to them, and be their guard, who will faithfully attend them their charge, 'till they are brought to the prefence of the common Lord of both. I know, faith the Apostle, whom I have believed; and I am perswaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

2. They commit their foul into the hands of God, that they may be admitted to dwell with him, even in that presence of his, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore: where all evil is excluded, and all good present, to fill their desires, and find

them matter of praise to all eternity.

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3. They commit their departing spirits into the hands of God, that their bodies may be at length rais'd and reunited to them, and that so they may enter entire at last into the blessedness prepared for them that love him.

3. We may confider the grounds upon which the faints proceed when they commit their fouls to God, both as to duty, and as to comfort.

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of God. Death is express'd by God's requiring the foul, Luke xii. 20. And when it is required by him, in compliance with his will, it is to be yielded up unto him, and with all submission by the faint.

His I am, and him will I serve while he will have me; and him would I obey, tho' it be to die, will a believer say. All my times are in his hand: and if he signify that my dying time is ome, as I received my soul from him, I bow

my head and refign it up unto him.

2. Herein Christ hath set believers a pattern: He became obedient unto death, after he had taken from him the form of a servant, Philip ii. 8. His was not taken from him, but he laid it down of himself. He gave up the ghost into the lands of his Father, and we are to follow him by doing likewise.

3. This is the concluding crowning act of our bedience, whereby we finish our course with lory to God, and comfort to ourselves: proving that none of us liveth to himself, and none of s dieth unto himself; but whether we live, we Vol. I.

live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: and that living and dying we are, and would be the Lord's, Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

(2.) The grounds on which they may do this with comfort; i. e. with lively hopes of being happy for ever, are many. To mention only two.

1. God's interest in them, and upon the most endearing soundation, that of redemption: into thine hands I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me.

Redeemed me from hell and the wrath to come, by giving thy fon to die for me. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature, bought with a price, faith the faint.

Redeemed me from the power of my inward corruption, and from love to it, and delight in it; and with my consent, hast drawn me to be thine, and thine for ever. Lord, I am thine,

fave me unchangeably.

2. His known faithfulness. Into thine band I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth. Into thy hand I commit my spirit, who hast been a God of truth, in performing thy promises to all thy people that are gone before me out of this world; and hast been so to me hitherto, and I cannot doubt, wilt continue so to the end.

APPLICATION.

1. 'Tis plain there is a vast difference between the souls and bodies of men: for when the earthly tabernacle is dissolved and droppeth down, the soul survives.

2. How bleffed a change hath the grace of God made in the judgments and affections of his people:

people; by teaching them to be more folicitous for their fouls and another world, than for their dying flesh, or any thing here below?

3. Is it the people of God that have so much encouragement to commit their souls into his hand, what then will they do in a dying hour,

who have no God to go to with hope.

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4. How great are our obligations to Jesus Christ, who hath purchased this privilege for us, of committing our spirits to God with faith

and hope at the approach of death?

Lastly, Let us not be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Let us continue trusting in the same God, giving up ourselves to the conduct of the same Spirit, and walking on in the same way with them: that so after we have been, thro' grace, faithful unto death, we may go hence in hope of meeting them in the same heaven; there to dwell with them, and with our Lord Jesus Christ, who redeem'd them and his whole hurch for evermore.

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SER-

SERMON II.

GENESIS III. 9.

And the Lord called unto Adam, and faid unto him, where art thou?

Our work preparatory to the Lord's-Supper, being to get our hearts affected with redeeming love, and the falvation brought us by the fecond Adam, it can't be unseasonable to take a view of our misery by the first; for which I have chosen these words.

We have here the voice of man's creator and judge, making inquisition after his creature now lost, and by his early disobedience fallen from him.

God made man upright, after his own image: but being in honour, through forgetting his maker, he continued not, but fell from his obedience and glory, into a vileness like that of the

beafts that perish.

Our first parents harkening to the temptation of the devil, and breaking through the divine law by eating of the forbidden fruit, soon experienced a sad change in themselves. And as soon as they discovered it, like guilty criminals, they attempted to sly from justice.

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Their great Creator coming into paradife after the apostasy, and finding his creatures fled, avoiding his presence, and hiding themselves among the trees, he calls to one of them in these words of the text, Adam, where art thou?

which words may be consider'd,

First, As an expression of admiration, i.e. How great and fudden a change! where! whither is the creature gone, which I so lately made, and dearly lov'd; with whom I was fo well pleas'd, and took fo much delight; who lately above all things defired my company, and rejoiced in it, placing his life in my favour and love? What a strange turn is made? and from whence can t proceed? Is man afraid of his God, that he thus runs from him? Is he impatient of my presence, weary of my converse, unwilling of arther acquaintance with me, that he now reires at my approach and feeks to hide? He was ot wont to do fo. Adam, where art thou?

Secondly, As a question put to Adam for coniction, to bring him to a closer consideration, nd deeper sense of his sin. Adam, where art ou? i.e. my fon and off-spring, whom I made a very peculiar manner, made after my own nage, and for my glory, the chief of my works this lower world, and to be prince over them l. Thou, whom I have fo greatly obliged, and one so much for, and had such just expectatins from, and fuch great concern about. Where rt thou? hast thou forsaken me, who gave thee fe, and breath, and being? me who raised thee ut of nothing, and took thee into the nearest lation to myself; and to whom I have subject-

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ed the works of my hands, and brought into a furnish'd world, and plac'd in a paradise of mine own planting, therein giving thee all things necessary to thy felicity on earth? and I would not have accounted this to have been enough for thee, and thy all, if thou hadst continued obedient, but after a while, would have given thee

even glory in heaven with myself.

Adam, where art thou? thou who wast lately in covenant with me, and then wast mine; acknowledging me thy owner, and sovereign Lord, whom thou wouldest love, and serve, and live devoted to obey, in whatever was known to thee to be my will: why then dost thou decline my presence, and seek to withdraw from it? What place can be desirable where I am not? And what provocation have I given, or what iniquity hast thou sound in me, that should incline thee now to affect a distance from me? What more could I have done, bestown, or promised, to engage a creature's affection? And is it not an instance of thy perverseness that thou runness from me, and art loth to be seen?

Where art thou, whom I made the head of all thy kind, and upon whose faithfulness, or disobedience, their happiness, or misery, de-

pends?

Thirdly, God may thus speak, Adam, where art thou? by way of sarcasm or taunt, to lay open man's folly in hearkening to the tempter and his temptation. What acquisition hast thou made by adventuring to sin against all the bars I put in thy way? Has it prov'd a successful attempt, to strive to become like God by casting

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casting away his fear and image? Or is rebellion and disobedience the way to glory? Are the tempter's promifes fulfilled, and thy vain conceits answered, of bettering thy state, and rifing higher, by contradicting thy maker's will in eating of the forbidden fruit? Is knowledge of good from the loss of it, and the experience of the contrary, fo great an attainment? And what fruit is there in fin, that is not just matter of shame? Many interpreters suppose those words of the 22d verse, may be understood in an ironical fense, behold the man is become as one of us; i. e. behold how near he is arrived to an equality with his maker! He lately arrived to that eminence that he was fo loth to be feen and advanced higher in wifdom, that he fought to hide himself among the trees, from him who filleth heaven and earth; as if he that made the eye could not fee, or any thing could skreen from his view. Behold how happy the man has made himself by his apostacy!

But Fourthly, It is the language of divine compassion, intimating the real sadness of Adam's state. God early saw and pitied the lapsed creature, and thus, as it were, lamented over him: Adam, where art thou? i. e. how low art thou sunk? how vile art thou become? what happiness hast thou forsaken and cast away? what misery hast thou chosen, and beginnest to feel, which puts thee upon slight? but where can he find a refuge that runs from God? how precious a soul hast thou defiled, destroyed, and

undone? Adam, where art thou?

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From the whole, the Observation I shall make is this.

Man by his early transgressing the law of his creator, sell from his original happiness, into a most wretched and deplorable state. From his not continuing in his original innocence and honour, the glory is departed. The crown is fallen from our heads: wo unto us that we have finned.

In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Give some account of this primitive apostacy, how it came to pass; that the blame may appear to lie on the sinner himself.

II. Confider the misery consequent hereup-

on.

III. Clear the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God in his proceedings with man with reference to it: and then briefly affist you in the application.

I. Concerning the primitive apostacy, how it came to pass that man being in honour, fell

from it.

reated perfectly holy, was yet in a mutable state. He wanted nothing necessary to his standing; but yet might fall, and lose the purity and felicity wherewith he was crowned. His rectitude, tho' natural, was not inseparable from his being, nor his happiness impossible to be forfeited by sin. He was made little lower than the angels, and capable of the everlasting blessedness with them; but yet, in the way to it, by turning aside or going back, he might come short of the glory of God. As a rational creature, God governed

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governed him according to his nature, by a law fully acquainting him with his will, as the rule of his duty, and expectations; and then held him upon trial, to fee how he would carry it; that so he might be rewarded, or punished, according to his choice.

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Thus God dealt with the angels themselves, who being at first left in a state of probation, such of them as fell were cast out of heaven; while the rest, those of them that abode constant, were confirmed in their blessedness for ever: as man should have been, had he retained his integrity during the time of his trial. How long that should have lasted, is not signified; his desection following so close upon his creation.

2dly. The occasion of this apostacy of man was Satan's temptation. From implacable hatred of God and his image, he set upon our first parents to draw them to sin, and sadly prevailed. He is called the wicked one, as being most full of sin, and restless in his endeavours to propagate it to others. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and still goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Even paradise itself was not free from his assaults, nor did innocent Adam, when tempted by him, long keep his standing therein. But,

3dly. Man's fall was voluntary, and his fin is to be charged upon himself. God gave him grace sufficient for his standing, in the use of which he might have been safe. The devil could not force his will to comply with his temptations to commit sin. He only tempted by the propo-

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fal of the forbidden fruit, which with what advantage foever fet off, had no constraining influence. The disguise might have been seen thro, and the bait rejected with the same ease as it was made. Grace and reason might, and ought to have guarded the fenses, restrained the lower faculties, abhorred the motion, and resolutely denied compliance; upon which a pleafing victory had enfued: but by the aftonishing neglect of these, man suffered himself to be drawn away with the lure of enjoying fenfual pleafure, and attaining to strange perfection in knowledge; and he having the determining of his own will, falls into the most heinous transgreffion, and fo makes a voluntary departure from God.

But this brings me to the

II. To confider the mifery confequent hereupon: which we may do under these two heads: viz.

1. What man loft.

2. What he became subject to.

1. As to what he loft.

(1.) He lost his original righteousness, the divine qualities making up the image of God that adorned his soul. This was the necessary consequent of sin, and slowed from it upon a legal, and upon a natural account. 'Twas the express determination of the law, that if man did sin, he must die, in which the spiritual death was included, the retiring of the Holy Spirit from him; upon which grace expires and vanishes out of the soul, as necessarily as light out of the air upon the withdrawing of the sun. The

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The Spirit was the principle of all that holy light, life and love, wherewith the human nature in innocency was crowned; of the heavenly frame and temper whereby man refembled God, and was inclined towards him. This by the first transgression man forfeited, and, according to the threatening of the law, is justly deprived of. The provoked Spirit returned to heaven, and carried with him his abused grace; leaving the soul all dark and deformed, and as a ruined temple in which he would no longer dwell.

And as fin meritoriously procured this, as being a breach of the law of God: fo it had a natural influence hereunto, being as opposite to grace and holiness, as darkness to light, and Iwaying to as much different an end. Innocent Adam had the glory of God for his end, his will for his rule, to which all his powers were difposed to yield a ready compliance: to honour and please his maker was his business and deight, and the enjoyment of his presence and avour, his highest felicity. This was the rectitude of the foul as it came out of God's hand. But in adventuring to fin, man renounced all this, forfook God as his fovereign ruler, and fet up his will against his; and turned to the creature as his chief good, in which he would place and feek his felicity and

And now you may behold the man with his back upon heaven, estranged from God, and having his heart as well as his feet upon the earth; his time and strength laid out for it, his thoughts,

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thoughts, aims, desires, hopes, and all his affections centring in it. This is the tendency of sin, and this was its dreadful effect upon our first parents, even the quenching and expelling of all grace. And that it does not do so still even with respect to the regenerate, as well as others, is not for want of malignity in it; but because they stand upon a different soundation, being united to Christ their vital head; and being under a better covenant, one assuring that because he lives, they shall live also. But the first Adam had no such security; and so for want of it, by the first transgression, was despoiled of his

original righteousness.

(2.) Consequent hereupon, he also lost communion with God, grew strange to him, and was rejected by him. As he cast off his maker's image, so he is cast out of his favour. Sin separates between man and his God, interrupts the bleffed converse that was before between them, fo as that it is no more to be enjoyed till the finner's enmity is subdued, and his nature and state changed, and he is washed, and justified, and fanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, I Cor. vi. 11. for what communion hath light with darkness, righteoufness with unrighteousness, the pure God with polluted finners? Only fuch as are again created after the image of God can truly fay, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jefus Christ.

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(3.) As when God goes, all that is valuable goes with him, man also lost his inward peace by means of his transgression. Whilst he pleased

pleased his maker he reap'd that satisfaction which is the fruit of innocence; but all was lost by his wilful rebellion. Sin that banishes holiness, drives peace too from the soul, and makes a wound in the spirit that none can bear. Having violated the law of his creator, Adam now conceives him arm'd with vengeance against him, and ready to execute the terrible sentence. He trembles at the thoughts of God, and dreads his presence. I beard, saith he, thy voice in the garden, and was afraid. And well he might, having made the Almighty his enemy, and who knoweth the power of his anger? according to his fear, so is his wrath.

(4.) He loses his hope of heaven, and puts himself out of the way to it. By sinning he comes short of the glory of God. And having nothing to expect as to a better world, how little satisfaction could he have in this, where he was condemn'd already, and out of which he

was, ere it was long, to die?

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But this brings us to confider,

2. What man further became subject to.

(1.) He was universally depraved, and became a flave to fin. Original righteousness being lost, a deep corruption succeeded and overspread the whole man in soul and body: no part was left unstain'd or free. And as fin defiles, so it also inslaves. It reigns in the mortal body, and debases the soul; imploying the faculties of the one, and members of the other, as instruments of unrighteousness; and man yields himself a lervant thereto, to sulfil it in the lusts thereof. His corrupt nature renders him averse to good, inclin'd

inclin'd to evil, and fo fix'd in it, as to be un-

willing to be fet free.

(2.) As a consequent of this he fell under the tyranny of Satan. The devil having overcome and drawn man to fin, takes him captive at his will, and rules over him in order to his ruin. Hence such as are in their natural state, are said to walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.

(3.) He was moreover expos'd to the wrath of God. He that was the favourite of heaven now fell under his maker's frowns, and had justice arm'd against him, ready to inslict the deserved punishment; and had no where to fly from it, no power to resist it. How can dried stubble

contend with the devouring flame?

(4.) An awakned accufing conscience sharpen'd his forrow, as what he madly procur'd to himfelf. The sinner not only loses his inward peace, but is fill'd with horror. The arrows of the Almighty stick in him: his own thoughts are let loose upon him; of the multitude of which, what could have abated, and at last removed, the pain, had not the promise of a redeemer been made?

(5.) The curse of the law cleaves to him, imbittering all the comforts of life, and filling it

with all manner of miseries.

(6.) He is liable to death with all the pains that lead to it. This is exprest in the sentence, Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, vers. 19. The soul and body, how close soever united, must undergo a dissolution. As by one

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man fin enter'd into the world, and death by fin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have finned, Rom. v. 12. Nor is this all; but,

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Lastly, The finner stands condemn'd to hell: To be banish'd from the presence of God, where there is sulness of joy, and cast into the place of torment, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. This being so dreadful, I go on in the

III. Place, to vindicate the wisdom, goodness and righteousness of God in his dealings with man: which is necessary, considering the difficulties that seem to lie against the permission of the fall, and what follow'd thereupon, and how far its effects extend, and to whom; at the thoughts of which, carnal reason is apt to plead thus.

1/t. How strange is it, that man should not be confirmed in his holy and happy state, immediately upon his production, if we consider with how much counsel and design he is made!

Man in a very peculiar manner was form'd by the finger of God, and in the nearest resemblance to him. The sacred Trinity seem to have enter'd on the work with special care and consultation, Let us make man in our own image, &c. Gen. i. 26. Man was design'd to be the chief of all God's creatures in this lower world; and therefore made last, and brought into being when all things were made ready for his reception; that he might be ready immediately to contemplate and adore his Creator's perfections shining forth in them all, and give him the praifes that were his due. Besides, for his sake God seems to review his works with an additional sa-

tisfaction, pronouncing them all very good, and taking a special delight in them. How is it then, that so finish'd a piece should be made in a possibility of falling, and so be left not without danger of being dash'd in pieces soon after it was made? Why was not the image of God so strongly and eminently drawn upon the soul, as would have effectually secur'd it beyond all fear of being effac'd; that so God might always have beheld with delight the works of his hands, and never had his glory in danger of being darkned in this lower world?

2dly, Why was the tempter permitted to fet upon our first parents, and that so early, and in so subtle a manner; hiding himself in the body of a serpent, the better to conceal his design, and

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work their ruin?

3dly, At least, why would God suffer this, when he foreknew man would yield, be seduc'd, ensnar'd, fall a prey to the prince of darkness, and the enemy of his glory, as well as of man's felicity; who would hereupon boast, that he had ruin'd that creature God had made for himself, and by whose free obedience he expected to be most honour'd; and would take occasion rejoycingly to say, that God had made man in vain?

4thly, And how easily could God have hinder'd this, by superadding such further measures of grace, as should have render'd man certainly victorious against all the assaults of Satan wherewith he could be tried?

5thly, And it may increase our wonder that he did not, considering how hateful sin is to him

him, that for which he spared not the angels, but for ever banished them his presence, as no longer to be endured in heaven: why then would he suffer that abominable thing to be spread any farther, and to defile and disturb his rest upon earth?

6thly, And how is it consistent with those divine perfections, mercy and goodness, to inslict so severe a punishment for the first offence, and one which seems so small a matter; and not to confine this punishment neither, to our first parents, but to inslict it upon all their offspring so largely here on earth, even to the world's end?

For answer,

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ift, Let it be laid as a firm ground, God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, Pfal. cxlv. 17. His absolute dominion over us, and propriety in us, that we are made by him, and for him, should dispose us humbly o adore, and not to entertain the least rising hought against any of his dispensations.

adly, 'Tis plain, that man when made at first, s well as when new made, must say, by the race of God, I am what I am. 'Twas the county of his Creator that gave him his being, and he denied him nothing that was due, tho'

e did not fix him in his bleffedness.

3dly, Man being a rational creature, capable f being ruled by a law, and of serving God by we and choice; for the discovery of these, it was not sit that in one and the same instant he would be brought out of nothing into a contrad state of holiness, but held for a time pon trial and probation; that he might have Vol. I.

title to the reward promised, or fall justly under the threatened punishment, as he obeyed, or transgressed the law given him for the rule of his actions.

4thly, He was furnished at his creation with power fufficient to stand, and laid under the strongest obligations to stand. What could be expected that God should have done more for him in order hereto, than he had done? he made him after his own image, in knowledge, righteoufness and true holiness; gave him an excellent being, and an happiness suitable to it. He instructed him in his law, requiring the most reafonable fervice, and urging to this by the most terrible threatening, to warn and deter man from disobedience, whereby his hatred of it was evidenced. And God made man the most alluring promise to encourage his obedience, and to shew how much he defired his felicity, and his real unwillingness of his revolt and ruin.

No means were wanting, or strength denied, sufficient to man's safety, had he been faithful in using them, as he might and ought. And how little strange need it seem, that a creature so amply surnished, so strongly obliged to stand, should be put upon some trial, in order to stand him for his after-state of full persection and re-

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5thly, The temptation wherewith he was affaulted might have been easily repelled. The devil did not set upon our first parents with external violence, as on Job; and to whatever advantage he represented the forbidden fruit, man might soon have seen thro' the disguise, consider'd

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der'd the danger, and with abhorrence rejected the bait. And had he done so, the stronger the temptation, the more signal proof had he given of his steady obedience, to his maker's praise. And tho' God knew, that man, if tempted, would certainly fall, and did not hinder it; so neither was he bound to do it. And moreover,

6thly, God knew too the great ends he would ferve in permitting this fall. He knew that this would give him occasion to magnify the riches of his grace towards perishing sinners; to make a better covenant after the violation of the first; to send his Son to seek and to save that which was lost; to deliver us from the wrath to come, repair the divine image on the soul, and raise us from an earthly to a celestial paradise: and God designed thus to advance his own glory, on the dark ground of man's sin and misery.

Lastly, Whatever punishment is denounced or inflicted upon man's disobedience, none that ither considers the evil of sin in general, or akes a just view of the first transgression in par-

icular, can think it exceeds the offence.

That man, who was just brought out of othing, should presently go into rebellion against his God that gave him life and breath; hat man should renounce his authority, and sfect to be equal with him; that man should espise his goodness, trample on his law, deny is truth, and believe in, and obey the devil beore God, to the destroying himself and all his strong: that man should do this, who was tely made after the image of God, and had no prruption within to incline him to sin, nor any D 2

temptation without, but what he might eafily resist: that man should do thus, in such a place as paradise, in the presence of God, and where he had lately been taken into covenant with him, and had had so many things to put him in mind of that covenant, to keep him faithful to it: that he, against so plain a command, and so large a promise, and terrible a threatening, and while he had sufficient power to persevere in obedience; notwithstanding all this, should forsake his God, and come short of his glory: 0 what crimson guilt doth it lay him under! and with what horror should it be thought of, that man thus sinned, and so most deservedly died!

Let me close all with

The APPLICATION.

1. How mutable is the best creature, if left to itself! how prone to change! Man holy and happy as he came out of God's hand, soon loses all that is valuable, and lays himself open to whatever is dreadful. Who after such a turn as this will not learn, that if ever we are safe, it must be in a dependance upon him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning?

2. How different a thing is fin in reality, from what it appears, and the finner apprehends when he ventures upon it? How foon is it found true in experience, what God declares in his word? he that finneth against me, wrongeth his own foul, and all they that hate me love death.

3. Was man in innocence fo foon betrayed, what reason have we to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation? Let not a day pass wherein

wherein you don't send up your earnest request o heaven, Lord, preserve me. Suffer me not o fall a prey to the roaring lion, that goeth about feeking whom he may devour.

4. Is the mifery fo great into which man fell by fin, how dear should be the name of a Sariour? how defireable an interest in him? seeing help for us is laid on one mighty to fave? how estless should you be to obtain this help, and have it cleared up to you, that you have obtain'd

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, &c. To the only wife God, our Saviour, e glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

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SERMON III.

LUKE XXIV. 32.

And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

HESE words are the communication that passed between two of Christ's disciples, to whom he, their Lord, appears soon after his resurrection. The occasion of it we have at large in the foregoing verses.

The third day is now come, in which Christ leaves his grave, and comes up out of it as the

hope and joy of lost finners.

Being risen, he will not long leave his disciples in doubt, but graciously reveal himself to them who were to be his witnesses to the world, verse 13.

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The same day two of them, viz. Cleopas, and another who is not named, were travelling to Emmaus, a village about sixty furlongs, or

feven miles and an half from Jerusalem.

Verse 14. As they go, they talk together of all those things that had happened, Christ's death,

death, and its extraordinary attending circumstances shewing him to be no common person, and the report of his resurrection from such as had been that day at his sepulchre.

When the disciples of Christ meet or walk together, nothing more becomes their character than discourses of their common Lord and Saviour. In him there is enough to fill our thoughts, and employ our tongues; and being thus engaged, we may invite him to make one of the company.

Thus it was here, verse 15. And it came to pass, that while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

How happy were they in having Christ with them, and how great would have been their joy, had they been sensible of it! But 'tis said, verse 16. Their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.

'Tis one thing to have Christ, another to discern this to our present comfort. The former makes our state safe; but without the other, may leave us for a time sorrowful; but that sorrow shall be turned into joy.

In the mean time our Lord, who may be nearer his servants than they are aware, observed their conversation, and how they were affected: verse 17. And he said unto them, what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? He knew well enough what had passed between them: but thus would bring them to repeat it, that thence he night take occasion to instruct them.

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ner of hrift's leath, He enquires after two things, viz. The subject of their conference, and the reason of their

dejection upon it.

To the former, what was the subject of their conference? Cleopas answers with wonder at the question. The transactions at Jerusalem were of late fo extraordinary, as might be supposed to fill the conversation of all that had been there; and he must be a stranger indeed, or very unconcerned, they thought, that was really unacquainted with the things that made fo great a noise, and challenged universal regard, Verse 18. Art thou, say they, only a stranger in Ferusalem, and bast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? Upon his going on to alk, what things? they answer, concerning fefus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people. Such a prophet was lately raifed up among us, confirmed of God by miracles, and confessed to be so by the people: But the chief Priests and our Rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have actually crucified him. These are the things that have been a doing.

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Upon which they add, as the reason of their sadness, verse 21. we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel. But now their

hearts and hopes begin to fail them.

They were much in the dark, as to the defign of the Messiah's coming, and intangled in the common opinion, that he was to bring to the Jews a temporal salvation, and set up a visible kingdom. With this they know not how to reconcile his sufferings and death, and their fears

fears were increased, as this was the third day

fince these things were done.

And tho' they had heard by the women of a vision they had of angels, who said that he was alive, they spake only as persons astonished, and

not convinced by it.

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Christ having heard this, sharply reproves their backwardness to believe all that the Prophets had spoken: and then with compassion proceeds to instruct them. And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them.

the things concerning himself.

Happy they that were his hearers: how fweetly does the time pass, the two or three hours they might be in walking, till they drew nigh the village? well might they importune him to abide with them: in compliance with which he tarried, till in breaking of bread he had manifested himself unto them, by opening their eyes that they knew him; after which he disappear'd, leaving them to the pleasing converse in the text: And they faid one to another, did not our beart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

In the words are confiderable,

1. The persons here communing together, the disciples of Christ, who were believers in These having lately been favoured with his visible and friendly presence and company, had thereby most pleasing communion with him. And indeed Christians are never fo fit and free for spiritual converse with each other, as when they have been converfing with their common Lord; as they can never be in his

company

company but they are, or may be the better for it.

2. The subject matter of their discourse, viz. How they were affected in Christ's presence and company, and what inward powerful impressions they selt themselves under, which they were led by a becoming temper to declare to one another. A sacred slame kindled within will not long be kept shut up.

3. The author of these inward impressions, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ as speaking to the heart. The clod will not grow warm, till the sun of righteousness approach, striking into it

with the beams of love.

4. The means Christ made use of by which to work these impressions, viz. the scriptures opened and applied by himself. Did not our beart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened unto us the scriptures? From the whole, the useful observation

we may make is this, viz.

There is a special power and presence, which Christ sometimes sends forth his word withal, and impressent it upon the hearts of his people; with which they are greatly affected themselves, and led with a becoming temper to confess to one another: Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us, and while he opened unto us the scriptures?

In fpeaking to this, I shall endeavour to shew,

I. That it is Christ's work to open and apply the scriptures, where they reach the heart.

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II. That these are the means he will ordinarily make use of to that end.

of, and regarded as talking with his people.

IV. In what respects their hearts may be said to burn, to whom he effectually speaks.

V. With what temper fuch as have experienced this, will be led to tell it to others.

I. It is Christ's work to open and apply the scriptures where they reach the heart. He is the great Prophet of his Church, who hath already revealed the will of God for our salvation, and gathered the whole of it into the Bible by his servants: but there is a veil upon the book, and upon the heart of man too, both which it belongs to Christ to remove; or the great things discovered will have no effect.

He opens the scripture that it may not remain a sealed book, and opens the understanding, and unbars the heart, that the light may enter to make the first saving change, and to be our strength and comfort afterward. Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the scriptures? but without him the heart had remained unmoved in Christ's disciples, as it does in thousands of others, and did for so long a time in ourselves.

The word has no virtue of itself to carry any impression to the heart: nor is it in the power of ministers, how excellent soever, to cloath it with life enough for that end. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but the success of their labours depends upon the divine influence:

so then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the

increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

This therefore is the work that Christ is both fit for, and appointed to, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God: and which he is carrying on by his Spirit, the great agent by which he hath promised to be with his word and ministers to the end of the world. By this he opens the Scriptures, and then the heart; as he did the heart of Lydia, when any favingly attend to the things that are spoken. It is his arm that is revealed, when the report of his ministers is believed, and that is the day of his power, wherein his people are made willing. When any heart is made to burn, 'tis thro' the influence of his Spirit; and fo the Gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in much affurance, effectually working in them that believe.

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II. The opening and applying of the Scriptures are the means Christ will ordinarily use, to reach and carry on his defign upon the heart. Did not our heart burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures, and this way talked with us? By these he enlightens the ignorant, awakens the fecure, humbles the proud, converts the finner, and strengthens, encourages, comforts and builds up the faint; and will go on to use them to these purposes to the world's end. Tho' all flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the grass, and both these wither and fade, the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto III. 'Tis you.

III. 'Tis in this way of opening and applying the Scriptures, that Christ is to be conceived of, and regarded as talking with his people. He did fo personally while he was upon earth, and continues to do fo by his ministers and Spirit now when he is gone to heaven. God who at fundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. The word first began to be opened and preach'd by our Lord in the days of his flesh; and tho' he be no longer upon earth, 'tis yet said, he speaketh from heaven, Heb. xii. 25. These are his own words fince his refurrection, Rev. iii. 20. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man bear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and fup with him, and he with me. They that are fent by him, are to speak in his name, have a promise of his presence, and affurance that he will look upon himself regarded or neglected, as they are. Luke x. 16. He that heareth you. beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that fent me.

And he not only speaks to us by the ministry of men, but by the influence of his Spirit.

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In either a more common,

Or a more special way.

1. In a more common way. The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. By this the great things revealed, are carried into the mind, and make strong impression there; striking the conscience, moving the affections,

and filling the finner with folicitude concerning his spiritual state. I may appeal to the experience of such as have sat for any time under the Gospel, whether in opening and applying the Scriptures, Christ hath not been dealing with them? Where is the person but must own that his mind has been sometimes troubled about concerns of a spiritual nature, and hath not felt convictions of the evil of sin, and been made sensible of the worth of a Saviour, and of the happiness of having an interest in him; and also of the misery, the unspeakable misery, of

dying without him?

When you have heard what Christ has done and fuffer'd, what he has purchased, what he offers to you, and is willing to bestow upon you; have not fuch discoveries, or talkings with you in fuch a manner, made you fenfible of your fin and folly in neglecting all, and led you to apprehend your danger upon that account? How defirable at fuch times, hath the state of true christians appeared to you, who stand peculiarly related to that Saviour which you have refused? and are delivered from the wrath to come, to which you are continually liable, and accepted of God to whom you are enemies, and tending to heaven, where, without a change, you can never come? As feriously weighing such things, have you not fecretly wish'd yourselves some of the happy number? Whilst man hath been fpeaking to the ear, hath not Christ by his Spirit carried his word farther, so that your hearts began to burn within you, as the effect of his talking with you, and opening to you the Scriptures? 2. There But,

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2. There is the special influence of his Spirit, by which Christ speaks to the heart, whenever it is favingly touch'd and affected. Did not our beart burn within us while he talked with us? i.e. so as never man spake and talked, and in a way that is better felt than expressed. He spake, and fent an invisible power along with his word, producing the effect defign'd, and making the remembrance of the time and place fweet? while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures. What strange impressions were made within! how divine a light overspread the mind! how heavenly a flame warmed the heart! Never had we fuch prospects and tastes, as at fuch a time and place, were you ready to fay. How ftrangely were our eyes held, that we should not know our dearest Lord! but what passed as an evidence of his presence, we shall never forget as long as we live. Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

But this brings to the fourth general.

IV. In what respects their hearts may be said to burn, to whom Christ effectually speaks. To keep your thoughts distinct, I shall consider this, either with respect to sinners, which he is drawing to him: or to believers, whom he is acquainting with their interest in him.

(1.) As to finners which he is drawing to him: When Christ opens the Scriptures, and talks with

fuch, their hearts may be faid to burn,

1. With a sense of sin, and a fearful apprehension of deserved wrath. "O the evil of sin! "how fearful a thing is it to fall into the hands " of the living God! how liable am I to do so?"
O my foul, which way can I look, but guilt
stares me in the face? and who can bear the
thought of that death, which is the wages of sin?

O the God I have offended, the Saviour I have flighted, the Spirit I have grieved, the patience and grace I have abused, and the wrath I have treasured up against the day of wrath? How shall they escape that neglect so great salvation? And if they do not escape, who can dwell with devouring fire, who can endure everlasting burnings?

O fin! O wrath! O the bitter foretastes of what I am liable for ever to endure! How vain and vanishing are all the pleasures of fin! How real, dreadful, and eternal the misery it deferves? How near am I to it? How much is it my due? In how much danger have I hitherto liv'd? What tongue can express, or heart conceive, the greatness of the misery into which I

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should fink, should I now die!

2. Their hearts are made to burn with ardent desire of being delivered from their sinful wretched state, and of securing an interest in Christ the only all-sufficient Saviour. In order to this, the sinner is shewn the door of hope open; and thereupon led to say, O my soul, my fears are many, and danger great: but blessed be God, my case is not desperate. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who soever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. Without him I am miserable as to both worlds, as there is salvation in no other; but in him is treasur'd up

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up all all that my soul can need. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ fesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief, I Tim. i. 15. he came to seek and to save such as are lost; and I am one of that number. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and has testify'd his willingness, in laying down his life for sinners. To a soul stung and ready to die under a sense of sin, how seasonable is the voice, behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Behold him travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save, Isai, Ixiii, 1.

Under the display of Christ's fulness, excelency, power and grace, the finner with whom be is talking, looks, and revives; revives, and longs, yea even grows restless in breathing after him, as being uncapable of being fatisfy'd with any thing elfe. Lord, cries fuch a one, give me Christ, or elfe I die. Nothing can stand me in stead withbut him, nothing is worthy to be compared with him: I can easily forsake all for him; and I here gree to do fo. Forgive my blindness and ignoance, that could live fo long without him, and nake so light of him. I now see him the chiefof ten thousand, altogether lovely. Take from ne, or lay upon me what thou pleasest, Christ, nd an interest in him, and hope of falvation by him, shall be to me instead of all things.

(2.) As to believers, whom Christ is acquainting with their interest in him, and thereby talking with them to their comfort; whilst he does b, their hearts may be made to burn.

Vol. I. E 2

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2dly, With longing defires to be with him.

And both these are excited by what he makes the subject of his discourses with them, namely, his sufferings, and his glory. Verse 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to en-

ter into his glory?

1. Their hearts are made to burn with love to him, and to do this by his speaking of his love to them, his love leading him to lay down his-life for them. Greater love bath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. And ye, my friends, are some of that number for whom I have done this. I loved you, and gave myfelf for you. I was cut off, but not for myself: I was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities: the chastisement of your peace was upon me, that by my stripes ye might be healed. For you, I was betray'd, reviled, condemned, and crucified: for you, my hands and feet were nail'd to the curfed tree, my head crown'd with thorns, and my fide pierced with a spear. 'Twas come to this, that one of us must die: you had offended; but that you might be spared, I willingly laid down my life; and by dying have made atonement for fin, delivered you from the wrath to come, made your peace with God, and opened the way for your acceptance with him. And by thus telling over his own love, well may their hearts, to whom he speaks, burn with love to him again: for nothing of this can be mention'd, without being a motive to kindle fuit able affection ut of made to tunion and all

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How glorious was the person, will the be-

liever fay, that humbled himself to the death, even the death of the cross. He that was adored by angels, fubmitted himself to be made the fcorn of finners. How high, how happy was his state before he came into our world? and yet how low did he stoop to raise us up? to what indignities did he fubmit? how much did he fuffer? and yet how freely did love carry him from the body and prefent with the flla dguord

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O my foul! I am ashamed of myself, that I have been no more affected hitherto, while hearing the most pathetical accounts of Christ's fufferings and death: but hearing him still speak of his loving me, and giving himself for me; of his bearing my fins in his own body upon the tree; of his making his foul an offering for fin, to ranfom mine; of his being wounded, that I might be healed; forfaken for a time, that I might not be cast off for ever: hearing that he thought not his life too dear, nor his death too dreadful, that he might make my peace with God, obtain my pardon, redeem me from all hat I had to fear, and purchase for me grace and heaven: while musing upon these things, my spark begins to kindle and get new life. O, ny Lord, thou hast overcome: sense of thy ove inflames my heart. Did not our hearts urn? i.e. with love? doubt will be blind y

2. The followers of Christ may have their earts made to burn, with defire to fee, and be with him, gerooned spaint out alive

To excite this, he declares when departing om them, I ascend to my Father and your ather, to my God and your God, John xx. 17.

In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, &c. I will come again and take you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And hearing this from the mouth of Christ, well may they long

to know by possession what it means.

O how much better must it be to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, than to be present in the body? To be there where we shall be freed from all evil, and put into possession of all good; raised to the most perfect state, and employ'd in the most delightful work; joined to the best society, and made pillars in the temple of God beyond all fear of going out, is by far the most eligible. And as Christ declares that he is coming to conduct to this, 'tis just in his expecting friends, who love his appearing, to say Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.

There is but one inquiry more, viz.

V. With what temper they, who under Christ's speaking to them have felt their hearts to burn within themselves, should be led to open it to others.

The answer to this is obvious.

1. With deep humility; as having their eye upon their unworthiness, that the Lord of glory should talk with such as them, and in so plain and powerful a manner lead them into an acquaintance with the word of truth; and thereby with the things concerning himself, which are so necessary to their safety and peace.

fay, how strange an ardour did we feel within

us kindling into a heavenly flame, while he talk'd with us, and opened to us the Scriptures? and opened to us the Scriptures?

3. With thankfulness and joy; from a just fense of the value of that distinguishing grace of Christ, which made the remembrance of the time and place where it was vouchfafed, fo pleasant to them afterwards.

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4. With defire and endeavour to bring others acquainted with Christ, by whom their hearts were made to burn within them. Come, fee a man that told us what none else could: Is not this the Christ? to allude to John iv. 29. and use the woman of Samaria's words, with a little where being fecured variation.

The APPLICATION. I qui nathat

1. Is it Christ's work to open and apply the Scriptures where they reach the heart, in reading, or attending upon the word preach'd? let your eye be to him. Whofoever may fpeak to the ear, believe you, that Christ only can effectually touch the heart, and be earnest with him for his presence and grace, if you would profit by what you hear.

2. Let Christ have all the glory of any good impressions made upon you. If you have felt your hearts to burn within you, 'tis the effect of his talking with you; therefore acknowledge his

power and presence, and live to his praise.

3. After your hearts have been made to burn within you, take heed of letting them grow cold. Watch against corruption within, and the world without, that you do not lose the things that are wrought.

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4. Be

4. Be much in Christ's company yourselves; and endeavour to draw others, whom you would be glad to see in the way to heaven, into it too. Tell them of his power and of his love, and of your experience of both; and that he is the same

vesterday, to day, and for ever.

where your hearts shall for ever burn with love to him, after you are admitted to dwell with him: where, with the highest satisfaction, you shall recount what he did for you by the way, and how kindly he bare you company, 'till he brought you to his Father's house at the end: where being secured of abiding, you shall be taken up in adoring his love, and singing his praise for ever.

ing or attended at on the world preached? Let your eye be to lune. Wholoever may fpeak to the ear, believe out that Christonly can elfortually touch the fresh, and be carried with him for his prefered and error.

impressions made upon you. It you have felt your ficarts to become thin you, his the effect of

his falkere with your specefore to movieded his

b g. After your hearts have been made to lurar within you, take heed of letting them crow cold.

2. Let Christ have all the riory of

power and prefence, and live to his graife.

Watch against correption within, at a the world R. R. Chart vol. 30 not fold the things that are

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SERMONIV

GENESIS XXXI. 13.

I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me.

J ACOB being dismissed by his Father Isaac, to go from Canaan to the higher part of Mesopotamia in Syria, to prevent the mischief designed him by his brother Esau, we have an account of one lodging-place he lighted upon in his journey, and of most memorable things which happened to him there, Chapter xxviii. 10, 11, &c.

The Sun setting, he lighted on a certain place, verse 11. and tarried there all night; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. This was an hard and seemingly uncomfortable lodging, but was sweetened by what follows, viz. The encouraging vision he saw, and the comfortable words he heard.

1. The encouraging vision he saw, verse 12. viz. a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the Angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself standing above it.

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The ascending and descending of the Angels, represented the constant correspondence which is kept up between heaven and earth. The counsels of heaven are executed upon earth; and the actions and affairs of this lower world are all

known and weigh'd above.

Some take the ascending Angels, to be the tutelar Angels of Canaan, that having guarded Jacob out of their land, were going up, while the Angels of Syria were descending, to take him under their care; these supposing every country to have some such guardians peculiar to it. But however it be as to this, 'tis enough that Angels are employed as ministring spirits to serve the purposes and designs of Providence, especially in ministring to those who shall be heirs of salva-From this service they rest not, day nor night, but are continually ascending and descending, according to the posts assigned them. And God represented as standing above the ladder, denotes his having the direction of all the motions of second causes, and his ordering them all to promote his glory, and fulfil his will.

The Angels ascend to give an account of what they have done, and to receive new orders from God; and then descend to execute the orders

they have received.

How seasonable and encouraging was this vision to poor Jacob in his desolate state? letting him know, that tho' he was made to wander from his father's house; yet still he was the care of a kind Providence, and the charge of the holy Angels. He had both a good guide, and a good guard.

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The ladder by which they are faid to afcend nd descend, is the mediation of Christ; the foot of which may be faid to be on earth, in his hunan nature, or in respect of his humiliation; he top, in beaven, in respect of his divine naure or his exaltation. All the intercourse beween heaven and earth, fince the fall, is by his ladder. To this vision some think our Saiour alludes, when he speaks of the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man, ohn i. 51. The kind offices the Angels do us, nd the benefits we receive by their ministraion, are all owing to Christ, who hath reconiled things on earth, and things in heaven, and nade them to meet in himself, Col. i. 20. Epb. 10.

Besides this encouraging vision which Jacob

aw: To add to his support, word being a state of

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2. We have the comfortable words he heard. God at the head of the ladder, or thro' Christ, epeats and confirms the promises made to his athers, verses 13, 14. That, in general, he would be the same to him that he had been to Abraham and Isaac: and moreover, gives him nany particular promises, suited to his present ircumstances. Verse 15. And behold I am with bee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou oest, and will bring thee again into this land: for will not leave thee, until I have done that which have spoken to thee of.

He was in some apprehension of danger from is brother Esau, and a long journey was before im, and he was to travel alone, in an unnown road, to an unknown country, where he

knew

knew not what he should meet with. How reviving was it now, to have God faying to him, I am with thee, to keep thee in all places whither

thou goeft.

He was going as an exile into a distant country; but God ingages to bring him again to Canaan, which was a type of heaven. And how contrary foever providences might feem to be to the promises, assurance is given of the performance of all in their feason. God would not leave him, till be had done that which he had spoken to him of a support ow stalened gut bas

After fuch a night as this, we have an account what Jacob did, Verses 18, 19. He rose early in the morning, and took the stone which he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, or monument of God's appearance and favour to him, and poured oil upon the top of it, and changed the name of the place from Luz, an Almond-tree, to Bethel the house of God; and in the most solemn manner, vowed a vow.

In general, he vowed that he would cleave to the Lord, as his God in covenant: and in particular, that he would express his gratitude, by making the stone he set up for a pillar, the house of God, or erect an altar there to the honour of God, and give God the tenth of all that God should give him, verses 20, 21, 22. If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; fo that I come again to my father's boufe in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: that is, he would rejoice in him, as fuch, and be the more strengly engaged to him: and this stone which !

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ma VO bave set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

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Thus at Bethel, Jacob had a gracious visit from heaven, God renewing his covenant with him there; and he on his part vowed a vow unto God, which was a confirmation of his covenant with God. With reference to which matter, God here in the text declares, I am the God of Bethel. In which denomination of God, we may consider, what it intimates on God's part, and what on Jacob's, with respect to what passed at Bethel.

At Bethel, Jacob had a vision of a ladder reaching from the earth to heaven, and of angels ascending and descending upon it, and of God himself at the head of it; which denoted God's providential government of the world directing, disposing, and ordering all things for the good of his church and people, of whom Jacob was here a type. And so God, as the God of Bethel, is as much as the God of Providence, ruling all things in heaven and earth, and in a peculiar manner concerning himself for the good of his faithful servants.

At Bethel, God found and spake to Jacob, and confirmed his covenant with him, with the most gracious declarations of what he would do for him; all which he was able and ready to fulfil. And so the God of Bethel is the God of Promise.

At Bethel, Jacob, on his part, upon God's making promises to him, gives up himself by wow to God; and with respect to this, God's declaring

declaring I am the God of Bethel, speaks his special observation of the solemn transactions of his people with him, and of their engagements which they have laid themselves under to him. And these shall be the three heads of discourse I shall briefly speak to. God is stilled the God of Bethel, that is,

1st. The God of Providence extending to

his people, and to all other creatures too.

2dly. The God of Promise, with reference to his people. And he is,

3dly. A God that takes special notice of the

vows they make unto him.

I. The God of Bethel is a God of Providence, of a special gracious Providence towards his people; and of this as exercised thro' a Mediator, by the ministry of angels. This is represented in the vision Jacob had in his sleep, of the angels ascending and descending by the ladder, which he saw reaching from heaven to earth, with God at the head of it, manifesting a par-

ticular regard to him.

(1.) He is the God of Providence, extending to all the creatures he has made. God did not make the world, and then leave it, confining himself to heaven, as some would have him. Tho' his throne be above, his kingdom ruleth over all. This world, and all its concerns, are under his government: orders proceed from him, and accounts are taken by him; and the motions and actions of all his creatures are managed and over-ruled to promote his glory.

They who would compliment God out of this world, and so deny his providence about

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his creatures here, as if it were beneath him, forget that it is no more dishonour to govern the world in all its parts, than it was to create it, as he hath done. Nay, his glory is no less advanced in managing all things for his own holy ends, than it was in making them. Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did be, and continues to do, in beaven, and in earth, &cc. Psalm cxxxv. 6. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth: which words imply not only knowledge, but care.

He is no unconcerned spectator of what is done; but like a skilful pilot sits at the helm, and steers the world to what course it shall move. His providence is often mysterious, but never-

theless real and universal.

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(2.) God exercises a special gracious providence about his servants. Where Jacob lodges, the angels are ascending and descending, as having a particular charge of him. Whilft Jacob fleeps, his God wakes, and wakes for him. This may be matter of comfort to all his posterity, that he that keepeth Ifrael, neither flumbereth nor fleepeth. God has a regard to all the works of his hands; but 'tis spoken with an emphasis, Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy. Upon every one of this number, his eye is fixed with fatisfaction and delight. He takes care of their persons, and guides their steps. Pfalm xxxvii. 27. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and be delighteth in his way.

He that rules the world, is the believer's father; fees his image upon him, and so, from peculiar him. If earthly parents love their children, much more will God love his: and hence his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong for him whose heart is

perfect towards him.

This, his care, is never intermitted, nor his presence withdrawn: Psalm cxxv. 2. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people from benceforth, even for ever. 'Tis not usual nor easy, for a woman to forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb: her child, her fucking child, her fon, her own fon, the fon of her womb; yet as this is possible that a mother may forget him, God declares his care to exceed that of the tenderest mother. Yea they may forget; yet will I not forget thee, faith the Lord, Isaiah xlix. 15. His people are called his Fewels, to justify and prove his special regard for them. Tho' the wife and prudent householder, looks after coarfer vessels, and the meanest glass, he takes care of nothing fo much as his jewels. So particular is the care, and so amazing the condescension of the providence of God, as to his children and chosen, that our Saviour affures his disciples, Matthew x. 30. The very bairs of your head are all numbered. God exercises a special providence about his people.

(3.) God employs his Angels as the ministers of his Providence in the world, particularly as to his people. Jacob saw the Angels ascending and descending. And with reference to those that are tending to heaven, are they not all said to be

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ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation? Heb. i. ult. Not that God needs the agency of any of his creatures, but for the honour of his majesty he is

pleased to use them.

As God stood at the head of Jacob's ladder, Jacob saw the Angels going up and coming down upon several errands, according to the will of their great Lord. The Angels are called watchers, Dan. iv. 13. They watch for God's orders; they watch for his honour, and his churches good: and as the Lord's portion is his people, about these they are chiefly employed,

as their peculiar charge.

We read indeed of an Angel fent to comfort Hagar, and relieve Ishmael; tho' he had scoffed at Isaac the heir of the covenant : but most frequently where we have an account of their being employed, 'tis in the concerns of God's fervants: and as being ministers intent upon their office, Christ declares, Matthew xviii. 10. Their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven; i. e. as waiting his pleafure concerning those to whom they are to minister. Their commission not only respects the church in general, but every particular member of it. Pfalm xci. I 1. He Shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their bands, left thou dash thy foot against a stone. Their ministry begins, as to the heirs of salvation, as soon as they are born, and continues till they come to heaven. The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them, Psalm xxxiv. 7. Our fafety

fafety from many evils and dangers, may be owing to their faithful, tho' invisible attendance.

Angels brought Lot out of Sodom, Gen. xxi. 17. An Angel stopt the mouths of the lions, when Daniel was in the den, which he owns with thankfulness to the Angels God, and his God, Dan. vi. 22. My God hath sent his Angel, and bath shut the lions mouths. An Angel knocks off Peter's chains, and brings him out of prison, Acts xii. 7. And when Abraham was sending his servant on an errand of great importance, he tells him for his encouragement, the Lord shall send his Angel with thee, and prosper thy way, Gen. xxiv. 40.

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We read of an Angel strengthening Christ in his agony; and how often may they be employed for the succour and support of his fol-

lowers?

Those blessed spirits are said to rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, Luke xv. 10. And their ministring to faints, is doubtless performed with love and delight. And after having attended them thro' all the stages of life, they are ready at death to convoy them to heaven, and the bleffedness enjoyed there, by the spirits of the just made perfect. What was done in the case of Lazarus, may tell all the members of Christ what to expect. And in the great day, when the Son of man shall come with power and great glory, he shall send his Angels to gather the elect from the four winds, even all the faints of God that have made a covenant with him; that they may fit down with Abraham, Isaac and Facob,

Jacob, in the kingdom of their common Father for ever.

Lastly, Angels are employed as the ministers of Providence, under a Mediator. This is the ladder by which they descend from God, on any kind errand to his People, and carry back any good news from them. Angels are all put in fubjection to Christ, who is head over all things to his church; and for his fake are fent to walk to and fro in the earth, to protect and fuccour, in opposition to the evil Angels, who continually go about feeking whom they may devour. 7acob had a guard of Angels attending him out, and at his coming back they again meet him in whole troops; fo that when he faw them he faid, this is God's hoft. They were his company and guard back again to the earthly Canaan; as they will be of all true Israelites to the better country, the heavenly one, where they shall be out of all danger and fear for ever.

That is the first thing, The God of Bethel is

the God of Providence.

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II. The God of Bethel is the God of Promise. As appearing at the head of the ladder, how graciously doth he engage himself to Jacob! how solemnly renew his covenant with him! And as 'tis here declared by himself, I am the God of Bethel, it plainly denotes,

1. That he takes delight in the promises he hath made to his people, and the covenant engagements in which he stands to them. Having voluntarily bound himself to be theirs, he remembers with satisfaction the time and place in which he declared what great things he would

Vol. I. F do

do for them, and takes all opportunities to shew his sincerity in promising, and his sidelity in performance. I am the God of Bethel, Jacob, the God that there engaged to be thine; and as such, to be with thee in all places, and at all times, and never to leave thee, till I have done that which I had spoken to thee of. And ever since that solemn transaction, I can as soon deny myself, as be unfaithful to thee. I am the God of Bethel; i. e. the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy, Deut. vii. 9.

And how oft is the security and reward of his people put upon this ground, God if faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; and God is faithful, who will not forget your work or labour of love? When the word is gone out of his mouth, God loves to speak of himself, as under no inclination to recal it. He values his faithfulness above all the world. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but

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the word of the Lord shall not pass away.

2. These words, I am the God of Bethel, being spoken twenty years after the promises and appearances there, were first made, God intimated by them, that he was the same now as beretofore; as able to guide and guard, as formerly.

It was an encouraging representation that faceb then had of God's power and condescension, in setting such a guard about him, and dealing so graciously with him. And God now lets him know, that he was still the same; that his arm was not shortned that he could not save, nor his compassion abated; that he was both mindful of his promises, and able and ready to perform

them, and knew the fittest season and way wherein to do it.

3. God proclaims this to tell his servant, that all the mercies he enjoyed, came from his hand and love, as his God in covenant; and that under this notion, he was still to look to him for all he should farther need. His growing rich in despight of Laban's malice, by the increase of his stock, was owing to the interposition of Providence, as God declares, verse 12. I have seen all that Laban doth unto thee. And that Providence was exerted in pursuance of the Promise formerly made, which God would have him know and believe he had been mindful of, and always would, verse 12. I am the God of Bethel, i. e. The God of Promise; which was the second thing observed.

III. At Bethel, Jacob vowed a Vow, which was in confirmation of his covenant with God: and so God's stiling himself the God of Bethel, denotes in general, that he takes special notice of the solemn transactions of his servants, what promises and vows they make to him, and where.

Particularly he is the God of Bethel, i. e. of his house of every place appointed for his worship, as observing who there vow and dedicate themselves to him, and who do not; in what manner any vow unto him, whether in truth, and with the heart, or deceitfully, and with guile. God can't be ignorant of what is done, and where; but he would be considered as particularly observing what passes at Bethel, i. e. in his house, and at his table there, now under these New Testament ages.

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The king at the gospel seast, is said to come to see the guests. God takes notice who tarries away from his house that ought to be there; and he takes notice too, in what dress every individual comes thither.

- 2. God is the God of Bethel, as approving his peoples dedicating themselves by vow, in confirmation of their covenant to him. This is their reasonable service, and what his promises and grace should readily lead them to. When God repeats his promises to us, engaging to be our God, how just and reasonable is it that the engagement should be mutual, and that we in the most solemn manner should bind ourselves to him. And God rewards with savour those Israelites indeed, that thus vow a vow unto him as facob did, the Lord shall be my God, Gen. xxviii. 21.
- 3. Lastly, God is the God of Bethel, as he is ready to reward his servants who make conscience of keeping their engagements, and walk in a sense of the vows of God upon their souls. Jacob might be sensible of God's beginning to perform his promises to him, and might hence take encouragement to expect their sull completion. He was now under conduct to Canaan, as the type of heaven: and to that land of Promise in the better world, God will assuredly bring the whole generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob.

They are now a peculiar people, having vowed themselves to the Lord; and he will at last declare the peculiar value he has for them before all the world, saying, gather my saints to-

gether

gether unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

And now as the use of all.

I. How defireable is a special relation to the God of Bethel, as the God of Providence, and of this as in a peculiar manner exercised about his people? You that have any good hope that you are some of the number, believe the particularity of Providence with reference to yourselves; and in a persuasion of this, let your hearts dwell at ease. As tending to heaven your father's house, leave him to lead, and resolve to follow: beg of him to choose for you; for in his choice you have always reason to acquiesce. He has all your times in his hand, and your concerns as to both worlds at heart, and has bid you cast your care upon him, for he careth for you.

The God of *Providence* may well be the hope of his people in every state. You can want nothing, but he can give you a supply of it; nor fear any thing, but what he can save you from, or carry you thro'. In every place you are under his eye, encircled with his arm, and shall be guided by his counsel, even unto death, and afterward received unto glory. Happy is the people that is in such a case, happy indeed,

whose God is the Lord.

2. As the God of Bethel is ever mindful of his Promises, his people can never want encouragement to come to his throne of grace. What he says to one, he says to all, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have

spoken to thee of. Now he loves to have his promises pleaded by them, and to be sought unto for what he hath engaged to do for them. His word is their warrant to make known their requests to him, and a ground to hope for a gracious answer. The God of Bethel never said un-

to the feed of Jacob, feek ye me in vain.

3. Does God stile himself the God of Bethel, as denoting his strict observance of what passes in his house? What seriousness becomes us in all religious duties and services, or when, in a way of worship, we have to do with God? when and wherever we present ourselves before him, let those solemn charges never be forgotten, keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, Eccles. v. 1. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life, Prov. iv. 23. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, Gal. vi. 7.

4. Is the God of Bethel to be conceived of, as a witnefs to all our solemn transactions and engagements? how great must be the sin and folly of being formal and insincere in vowing to the Lord, or in pretending, either to enter into, or consirm our covenant with him, when leaving our hearts behind? Great must be the sin and folly of these; seeing God can't but know what is done in his house, and in what manner: and the danger is no less; seeing it is a mocking him to his face. And how awful are those words, cursed be the deceiver which bath a male in his flock, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing, &c. Mal. i. 14.

5. Does God as the God of Bethel remember the vows there made, with what confusion will

they be filled, who after opening their mouths unto the Lord, prove unfaithful, and go back? what a sting will be carried in these words, when spoken to any that lies under the guilt of dealing deceitfully with God, I am the God of Beth-

el, where thou vowedst a vow unto me?

Lastly, Does God as the God of Bethel remember his peoples Vows, and his own Promifes? what consolation may this yield to Ifraelites indeed, whose hearts are upright in their vows to, and covenantings with God, and who make confcience of being true to the relations and engagements in which they stand to him? their fincerity, tho' a fecret to men, is known to God. 'Tis the effect of his own Spirit and Grace that has been at work in them, and may encourage their trust as waiting for the further instances of his favour and faithfulness to them.

With the upright the God of Bethel will shew himself upright. He knows the kind thoughts that he thinks towards them, and will be ever mindful of his covenant, and the great things he hath therein engaged to do for them. He is not ashamed to be called their God, but will bless and provide for them as fuch, and will never turn away from them to do them good: and has moreover undertaken that he will put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him: and they having been made and kept faithful to the death, how pleasing may be their prospects beyond it! Such as they shall appear to be God's, in the great day when he maketh up his jewels.

SERMON

LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands and bleffed them.

And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and car-ried up into Heaven.

UR bleffed Lord is gone to Heaven, not with a design to be always absent; but to return, and take up his People along with him. The Heavens must contain him till the time of the restitution of all things; but then he will come from thence: and 'tis the character of his friends to be looking for him, they having abundant reason to love his appearing.

The manner of his coming in general is foretold by the Angels to his followers, who were gazing after him in his ascent, Acts i. 11. This Jame Jesus which is taken from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven. And how that was is here recorded, as to several circumstances which can't but be of comfortable confideration to his be-

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lieving members: And he led them out as far as to Bethany: and he lift up his hands and bleffed them, and it came to pass while he bleffed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. Our Lord is said, Acts i. 3. to have shewed himself alive to his chosen apostles after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. 'Tis to the end of this space that the text belongs, as setting forth what happened when the forty days were expired. Then he led forth his Disciples, as far as to Bethany.

The words fet forth the antecedents to our

Lords ascension, and the ascension itself.

I. The antecedents to his ascension; where two things are mentioned, viz.

1. That he led them forth as far as to Bethany.

The leader here is the captain of our falvation; our great high-priest going, as forerunner, to take possession of the kingdom which he laid down his life to purchase, and had bidden his followers expect.

The persons be leads or takes with him, are the apostles, that is, the eleven; Judas before this being dead, and gone to his own place.

These are not presently to follow him to Heaven; but they shall attend him as it were to the gate, and be with him to the last moment of

his abode upon earth.

Christ takes them as chosen witnesses, and special favourites, in token of peculiar love to themselves, and to qualify them to testify what they should see, to others. He led them out, that

that is, out from Jerusalem: not admitting the body of the Jews, his declared enemies, to see him ascend; but his friends, to teach them with calmness to turn their backs upon this world and all its accommodations, and quietly to leave it, as

having glory in their eye.

He led them out as far as to Bethany; that is, to that part of the Mount of Olives, the town called Bethany. This place is faid to be about fifteen furlongs, or about two miles from Jerufalem, John xi. 18. And that part of Mount Olivet from whence our Lord is thought to have afcended, is faid to be a Sabbath days journey from Jerufalem, which is about the same di-

stance, Acts i. 11.

Twas not far from the garden where our Lord was in an agony the night he was betrayed: and near the same place, his suffering being over, he chooses to take his rise, and enter into his glory. And in going from Jerusalem thither, if ever there was a pleasant walk upon earth, we may well conclude this was one: pleasant indeed it was to those happy sew whom Christ took along with him, as it were to bring him going in his way to heaven. How glorious, may we imagine, were his looks! How ravishing his voice! How gracious the words that dropt from his lips! —— But their pleasing journey must have an end, and their master be taken from their head.

2. Having brought his Disciples to the place designed, we have an account of his solemn blessing of them, and the posture he used in it.

He lift up his hands and bleffed them.

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He lift up his hands, as praying for a bleffing; and to let them know, how he would be employed for them when he should be out of fight: or, as fome think, the lifting up of his hand denoted authority, that he was one that could bless them: and in blessing them, could bless them indeed and effectually.

Bethany fignifies the house of affliction; but Christ could make it a place of blessing. He had often bleffed his Disciples before: but special notice is taken of his doing it at this time and place. The last moments of his stay with them, were employed in bleffing of them.

Having loved his own, he loved them unto the Love led him to lay down his life; and dying did not quench or abate his love. When about to remove, he gives them an endearing instance of his affection; to assure them, that no distance should separate them from it, or make it less. Though he can die no more, he lives to love as much as ever, and would have his friends believe, that love would still continue him theirs, even in his most exalted state.

These are the antecedents of his ascension.

II. The words fet before us the ascension itself, as to what it implies, viz. a parting from bis Disciples.

They tell us, what became of him; he was carried up into Heaven. They tell us, how he was employed when he was taken up, namely, in bleffing those that were with him. And it came to pass while he bleffed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. His last words are words of bleffing; and this is what they hear from him at parting, and as he goes

up, till he is out of fight.

Tis this circumstance that I have pitched upon, and would now call your meditations to, under this plain proposition.

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That our dear Redeemer, at his ascension to Heaven, took leave of his Disciples with a solemn

bleffing.

There are four things that deserve to be confidered.

I. Why Christ was parted from his Disciples.

II. Whither he was carried, and why.

III. What is implied in his bleffing of them.

IV. For what purposes he chose in this man-

ner to go hence.

1. Why was Christ parted from his Disciples, and did not either continue with them in this world, or take them along with him to heaven?

This is an enquiry that even the Apostles were ready to make, and could not easily admit the thoughts of a separation. And several things are obvious that seem to render the dispensation difficult.

the abounding of fin in the world, and the abiding of the remains of it in the best: the observation and experience of which, can't but be grievous to them; and the more so, the more they love God, and the greater their concern and zeal is for his glory. Add hereto, the afflictions wherewith they are often tried, the temptations they are put to conflict with, the difficulty of what they have to do, the weight

of what they may be called to bear, all telling them that this world is a very evil place; which may make it a matter of wonder, that they that are not of it, should be left in it, after their Lord and head is removed.

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- 2. This may add to the difficulty, the confideration how much better it is to be with Christ, both in itself, and in the apprehension of his believing followers, than to stay in this world. To be with Christ, is to be in a better place, in a better state, and with better company; in the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore; where all evil is excluded, moral and natural, and all good is present, to be fully enjoyed for ever. When looking off from this to that blissful state, whether the forerunner is for them entered, they can't but reckon it far better to be there. Grace that comes from heaven, having in some measure fitted them for it, carries up their fouls in earnest desires after it. And those desires are sometimes heightened by the foretastes of heaven let down to them here: upon which, they wish to be where what is here begun fo much to their comfort, may be perfected, and no more change or interruption feared. Having tafted of Canaan's grapes, they long to be in the good land. The church fays, Come, Lord Jesus, Rev. xxii. 20. Make haste, my beloved, Cant. viii. 14. And when these are their defires, how is it that an answer is deferred?
- 3. The followers of Christ during their stay below, travel with a great concern, lest they should

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should miscarry in their way after him to glory. Many things ferve to raife and feed fuch a concern: fuch as the decitfulness and treachery of their own heart; the malice, diligence, power and policy of Satan, who as a roaring lion continually goeth about feeking whom he may devour; the allurements and terrors of the world, which their mighty enemy is ready to manage against them with the utmost advantage: the consideration of which, and fuch like dangerous things to their standing, fills them with many anxious folicitous thoughts, lest they should one day fall. And to the trouble by these, they will be more or less liable, till they find themselves where there can be no enemy or danger, even with Christ.

4. Their Lord and head in heaven, is well acquainted how it is with them here, and hath all this while the most affectionate concern for them: for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He sees the dangers wherewith his people are encompassed; is witness to the tears they shed, the groans they vent, and the prayers they put up for full and final deliverance in being with him. If it be asked, what account can then be given of the distance, at which the members are for a time kept from their glorified head?

I answer,

1. Believers are not made such for themselves alone, but to serve the glory of God, and the Redeemer's interest and honour, in their being useful to the souls of others. And they, for this end, are continued for a time on earth,

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tho' their Lord is gone to heaven, a long while before them. They that are born from beaven, and so are themselves made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, are the persons that the holy Spirit will ordinarily use, as instruments for the conversion and ediscation of others; and for this end, their abiding in the slesh is more necessary, than their obtaining their own felicity at present, because they may help (and upon noble principles) to reconcile others to God by Christ, and bring them into a state of salvation. How little could be expected to be done for the salvation of sinners, if saints, as soon as became such, were called hence to be with Christ.

2. Christ upon his going to heaven, does not infift that his disciples should presently follow him, but earnestly recommends them to his father's keeping, John xvii. 11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy father, keep thro' thine own name those whom thou hast given me. The name of God stands for all the divine perfections; these he will eminently display about his people, during their stay in the present world: and he will magnify by it his wisdom in directing them, his power in preserving and bearing them up, his mercy and grace in pitying and pardoning their manifold defects, his all-sufficiency and faithfulness in supplying their wants, fulfilling his promifes, and conducting them through all difficulties and dangers to the unseen happiness they were bid to trust him for. After all the troubles and fears to which they were subject by the way, thus he will lead them to say at the end of it, surely goodness and mercy hath followed us all the days of our lives; and in a review of this, they will say, we will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, and with

higher transport praise his name.

3. Believers travelling graces are to have a time for exercise, such as their knowledge, faith, hope, and patience. These are to go with them to heaven, and are to have a time for growth. And in order to this, believers must be continued for a season in this present world, under the influence of the Spirit, that they may gradually come up to the stature of persect men in Christ, and so with greater advantage enter into

his joy.

Lastly, Our blessed Lord glorisied his Father by a life of service and suffering upon earth before he ascended to heaven: and as the servants are not greater than their Lord, it need not seem strange that his disciples are to follow him the same way. To this they are called under the most encouraging promise, If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be. And they that are to be with him in the end, need not think much of any thing he calls them to by the way; the services and sufferings of the present life not being worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

So much for the first thing, Christ's being parted from his disciples.

II. We are to confider whither he was carried, and why.

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Being departed from his disciples, 'tis said, be was carried into heaven.

It was of a mournful found that there must be a separation; but it was matter of joy, that upon his remove he was going to heaven. Several reasons did speak it sit that his disciples should tarry for a time upon earth, and that their Redeemer should go before them to heaven. He tells them in general, that 'twas for their advantage that he should depart. This he knew they could not easily admit, and therefore he urges it with a great deal of spirit and emphasis, John xvi. 7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.

1. He was carried up as a conqueror to heaven, to take possession of his own glory; the glory which he prayed for, and lived and died in the assurance of. His prayer has the nature of a claim, upon his finishing the work that was given him to do, John xvii. 5. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. And that his members might not think this was nothing to them, he adds, full to their sase, verse 24. Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.

2. He was carried up to heaven in a way of triumph, to prove his facrifice was accepted, fatisfactory and well pleasing to God. We may rest assured of this by his abiding in heaven, whither he went, and his welcome and entertainment there. This is an argument which he signifies that holy Spirit should use, to convince

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the world of righteousness. He will reprove or convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more, John xvi.

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3. Having finished his oblation on the cross. he went to heaven, as our great high prieft, to make intercession for us in the virtue of his facrifice; and to take possession of the blessings of which his blood was the price. By his own blood he is entered into heaven itself, that holy place not made with hands; and is able to fave to the uttermost, them that come unto God by bim, feeing be ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25. Having fuch an high prieft, we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath confecrated for us thro' the veil, that is to fay his flesh: freedom of access to God, in the name of our Advocate now, and ever with him, in whom the Father is always well pleafed, and whom he always hears.

4. He went to heaven to make way for the Spirit to come down to prepare his people to come and be with him, and to be their comforter by the way. This he affures his disciples of, to reconcile them to his departure, John xvi. 7. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come; but if I depart,

I will fend him unto you.

5. Christ was carried to heaven to triumph over all our spiritual enemies, sin and satan, death and hell; and as the glorisied head of his church, to give out whatever his people need, Ephes. iv. 8. When he ascended up on high, he led captivity

captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

Lastly, He went to heaven as a forerunner to take possession of it for his people, and make all things ready against their coming. This is the comfortable message he sends his disciples after his refurrection, John xx. 17. Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God. And he plainly acquaints them with his defign in going, John xiv. 1, 2. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. these ends, Christ at parting from his disciples was carried up to heaven. But as he would not depart without blessing of them, we are,

III. To shew what is imported in it.

To bless in general, is to speak well to any. And they were good and comfortable words

which Christ here spake to his disciples.

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1. In a way of prayer, as some think, he defired a blessing for them. Isaac blessed Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 28. praying thus for him, God give thee of the dew of heaven. And again, Gen. xxviii. 3. God Almighty bless thee. Thus Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, in praying for them, Gen. xlviii. 16. The angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.

2. In a way of authority, as others think, he pronounced a bleffing upon them. Christ was sent of God to bless, and in bleffing these his G 2 disciples,

disciples, he gave them as it were security that they should have whatever was necessary to their felicity, even all the great and glorious things which his blood was shed to purchase. should have whatever was necessary for them as Christians, and conduced to the safety, comfort, and happiness of their own souls; and whatever was necessary for them as Ministers and Apostles, to furnish and fit them for what they had to do for the falvation of others. Thus in bleffing, our Lord made them bleffed in themselves, and blessings to others; spake comfortably both to them now, and concerning them for a great while to come. How fweet was Christ's voice! how ravishing his words! how happy were the fouls upon whom, at his departure from the earth, he left a bleffing behind him to rest!

But this brings us to confider the fourth thing proposed.

IV. Why Christ chose to go hence in this

manner, bleffing his disciples?

1. As the Messiah, the promised seed, blessing was his work. With this he began his ministry, Mat. v. With this he closes his stay upon earth. It was foretold long before his coming, all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him, Gen. xviii. 18. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed, Psal. lxxii. 17. He was sent of God to bless, Acts iii. 25, 26. and as blessing he return'd to him. In all he did, he acted according to the characters given of him, the desire of

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all nations, the confolation of Ifrael, &c. and appear'd to be he that should come, and that no other is to be look'd for.

2. He parted from his disciples blessing them, to let them know that his gifts and calling were without repentance; that he had chosen them, and blessed them, and he continued in the same mind, that they should be or abide blessed. He would let his disciples know that as he was the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; so he

was and would be the same to them.

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3. He went hence blessing them, to give his disciples the fullest affurance that he did not go away displeased, but in persect friendship. He had treated them with the utmost tenderness and endearment: and that there might be no fuspicion that his love was abated, he parts with them with an evidence of it, giving them his bleffing. He did not go away unknown to them, or without taking leave: he did not break off his discourse abruptly, nor fpeak coldly to them; but after a fweet walk together from Jerusalem to Bethany, at the place of parting, he, in the most affectionate manner, lift up his hands and bleffed them. They were his children, and he bleffed them as a father. They were his fervants, and he bleffed them as their Lord and master. They were his subjects, and he blessed them as their king and ruler. They were his flock, and he bleffed hem as the great and good shepherd that laid lown his life for the sheep. In a word, they were his ransom'd ones, and he bleffed them as heir only all-sufficient saviour. At his going up

to heaven, he left a bleffing behind him, to let them know that the separation to be made was not meant to their hurt, nor to be imputed

to any abatement of love.

4. He parts bleffing his Disciples, to let them know that his death and sufferings were available for all the great ends for which they were undergone: that as to impetration, all was sinished; and now it belong'd to him freely to give out what he had dearly purchased, and to bid them welcome to all that he had acquired for them.

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He had redeemed them from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them; blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against them, and contrary to them, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to his cross: and now the benefit of all was theirs, which he gives them affurance of by his blessing them.

5. He parts with his disciples blessing them, this day being a day of gladness to himself, in which he was willing they should also share. He had been lately humbled to a cross and grave; but now the time was come for his being highly exalted, solemnly crown'd, and inthroned: well, the oil of gladness poured upon him, he would have to run down upon them. As his going away was to himself just matter of joy, he provides that it may not leave them overwhelmed with sorrow: that when they should be ready to say with a sigh or tear, he is gone, they might take comfort in the remembrance of the endearing manner in which

he took leave, that he went away bleffing them.

6. He parted from his disciples blessing them as his last act, to let them know that he went away theirs, and carried with him that affection that would always continue him so; and as such, he would have them think and speak of him, though out of sight. From the endearing manner in which he chose to go hence, he would have them form their apprehensions of

him, 'till he came again.

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ich he 7. Lastly, He parted from them blessing them, to lay them in a cordial from the assurance of his love, against the hatred and hard treatment they might meet with from the world; and to engage them the more sirmly to cleave to him, whatever they might be called to suffer for him. In the world, be had told them, they should have tribulation; but he went out of it blessing them, as a pledge that in him they should have peace. And in a remembrance of this, Peter's answer might be used by them to every future temptation to leave him, Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

APPLICATION.

r. Think of the present separation between Christ and his disciples, as not always to last. Christ is now in one world, and many of his members in another; but it shall not be always so. He is in a sense absent, which hath a mournful sound: but he is coming again, coming quickly, and that is comfortable and reviving,

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whatever forrows his departure tends to give. Read his own words, John xvi. 22. Ye now therefore have forrow: but I will fee you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man

taketh from you.

2. Endeavour that the separation between your Lord and you, be as little as possible. Be frequently thinking and speaking of him. Make conscience of remembring him. Let him dwell upon your minds, and dwell in your hearts, as an absent friend should do whom you

dearly love.

3. In Christ's bodily absence, prize and be greatly thankful for the presence of his Spirit. This is what Christ hath promised, and upon his ascending up on high, made way for his followers receiving, and what he hath encouraged them to ask and expect. This is a blessing suited to your present state; and is more needed by you, and more advantageous to you than Christ's bodily presence alone could be.

'Tis the Spirit that animates ordinances, which otherwise would be empty shadows and dry breasts; and by them communicates nourishment, strength and comfort to our souls. By the Spirit believers are prepared for heaven, raised to a well-grounded hope of it, and sometimes enabled to rejoice with a joy that has some-

thing of glory in it.

4. Think with pleasure of the blessed change made in Christ, who from being under the deepest abasement, is raised to the highest glory; from being despised, arraigned and condemned by

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by men, and hung on a cross, is enthroned on high, hath a name above every name, Angels, principalities and powers being subject to him, and bid to worship him. How pleasing should be the thoughts of this!

5. Was Christ carried to heaven, and continues there? Let this confirm your faith, as to the fulness of his facrifice, and help you to triumph in it. Who shall accuse? Who shall condemn? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. It is Christ that died, year ather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Rom. viii. 33, &cc.

6. This may greatly encourage believers to approach to God in the name of Christ, as depending upon his merits and interest, not-withstanding their lamentable defects. In him the Father is well pleased; and whatever we ask in Christ's name, according to his will, he will give it us. And thro' him all the infirmities of our souls and services shall be forgiven. He has undertaken to answer for all, and procure us a hearty welcome, acceptance and blessing.

7. Is Christ in heaven as head of his church, how surely then shall his interest live upon earth? His purposes be accomplished, his enemies subdued, his gospel succeeded, till he see of the travail of his soul and is satisfied?

8. Is Christ in heaven, let your hearts be there, and your hopes there. Be not strangers to the place where Christ, as fore-runner, is for

you entered. The way is open and fafe; and the more you converse by faith with your expected blessedness in being with Christ, with the greater readiness and satisfaction you may go hence, when called to enter upon it.

From the third general, Christ being able to bless his disciples by commanding a blessing, as

well as praying for it. Learn,

1. That all true believers are happy persons, are blessed of Christ; and they whom the son of God blesses, are blessed indeed.

2. The only way to true bleffedness is to se-

cure an interest in Christ.

3. How little need they regard the reproaches or curses of men, who are blessed of Christ. Men have it not in their power to make cursed those whom they may wish to be so: but Jesus Christ conveys the blessing where he pronounces it.

4. Miserable is the state of such as reject the only Saviour; for in doing so they reject the greatest blessing: and continuing to do so, are without hope, and have all that is dreadful to expect and sear.

From the manner of Christ's parting with his disciples, his going away from them bleffing

them. Learn,

1. Of how forgiving a temper the bleffed

Jesus is.

His disciples had discovered a great deal of unbelief in him. They forsook him when apprehended, and dealt very disingenuously with him. But he mentions nothing of all this at

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parting, buries all in filence, as having freely forgiven them, and goes away with goodwill in his heart and looks, and a bleffing in his mouth.

2. What reason have believers to love Christ's appearance, as he will so come in like manner from heaven, as he was carried thither? and in regard of the grace that shall be brought unto them when he shall be revealed. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him. Your Lord is coming, coming with a blessing; lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh.

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SERMON VI.

MATTHEW XIV. 27.

Be of good chear, it is I.

THESE are the words of our bleffed Lord to his now affrighted and troubled disciples; the occasion of which we find set down in

the foregoing verses.

After the famous miracle of feeding five thoufand men with five loaves and two fishes, verses 20, 21. our Lord constrained his disciples to get into a ship, that they might pass over to the other fide of the sea of Galilee before him, which gave occasion for his working another miracle. And being now left behind his disciples, he sent away the multitude who had formed a defign to take him by force, and make him a king, as you read, John vi. 15. and then went up into a mountain apart to pray. And the' the evening was come, he was not weary of his folitude from men, being conversant with his Father; for when it was come, he was there alone, and abode fo for a confiderable time. In the mean while, the ship that carried his disciples was got into the midst of the sea, where several things concurred for

for the trial of their faith: a contrary wind a-rose, by which the sea was enraged, and their vessel forely tossed upon the waves; it was dark and their Lord was absent; the storm was lasting, and they asraid, and knew not that their Lord would come to their relief, John vi. 17, 18.

Christ would accustom them to hardship by degrees. They had before this been in danger at sea, but then their Lord was present with them; and tho' he was asseep, they had free recourse to him to awake him, and did so, with their cries, Mat. viii. 24, 25, &c. But now they were without his company, and did not know and believe he was concerned for their preservation. In this sad case they were for the greatest part of the night, even till the fourth watch; when Jesus, who is never unmindful of his servants, came towards them, walking upon the sea.

But, tho' their fears and troubles were great while Christ was absent, they were increased at his coming to them in so wonderful a way, walking on the sea to give them help: for tho' it was their Lord that drew nigh to them, for whose coming they wished, and that most earnestly, they knew him not when he was come, but were troubled at the fight of him, saying, that he whom they saw was a spirit, and crying out for fear of it. What saith do we often need till we receive the answer of our own prayers? And how ready are our hearts to sink, even when God and and Christ are about accomplishing our deliverance?

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This is the promise given to the faithful, concerning the appearance of the Messiah in the days of his flesh, Mal. iii. 1. The Lord whom ye feek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold be shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But then 'tis asked, who may abide the day of his coming? verse 2. And how aptly may the same question be put, as to some of his fignal appearances for his people in his providence, especially when at death, and at the last judgment he shall come to gather his faints unto him? with reference to that day, how necessary is his own advice, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son Tho' righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, the clouds and darkness that are round about him, are apt to overwhelm the minds of his servants: and how foon would their hearts fail them, did he not after the most awful displays of his Majesty, speak to them with a still and merciful voice, faying, Be of good cheer, it is I.

In this verse are considerable,

I. The person that spake, the Lord Jesus Christ: He that made the world, and by whom it consists; who has all power in heaven and earth, and is head over all things to his church, which is his body, peculiarly dear to him, and of which no member shall ever be lost.

2. Those to whom he spake, viz. his disciples in their present distress; and by them to all true christians, into whatever trouble they may fall.

The

The consternation was great in which Christ now found them; and the cause of it is noted, they thought they had seen a spirit, of which we have all a natural dread, and which even good men cannot quite put it off. They feeing Christ walking towards them upon the water, concluded 'twas an apparition, or a spirit in a visible shape, which made them cry out for fear. Their thoughts were as much troubled even as the fea, at this time; fo that they feemed to have forgot by whom they were fent upon it, and to difbelieve that his power and goodness, of which they had lately feen so memorable a proof in the miracle of the loaves, were fufficient for their prefervation, or, at least, that they would be concerned for it.

3. We may observe the kind nature and design of Christ's speech to them at this time. It was full of compassion, and tending to their support: Be of good cheer, do not faint, nor be afraid. True consolation is the purchase of Christ's blood, and what he is anointed to preach. He hath told his disciples, In the world you shall have tribulation: but, adds he, be of good cheer, I have

overcome the world, John xvi. 33:

4. The argument be used to silence their sears and doubts, and give them relief, it is I: i. e. one whom you have seen and known, and need not now distrust; one whose power and grace you have experienced, and on which you may still rely: one who hath the same care for you, and the same love for you, and stand in the same relation to you, wherever you are. I am your Lord and friend, your Redeemer and Saviour,

there is no room for fear and despondence, It is I.

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5. The time when he spake thus comfortably to them, straitway. In their greatest extremity, he speedily reveals himself to be their refuge; and raises their hope, when their hearts are ready to fail. When they lift up their cries as forsaken and ready to perish, he shews himself at hand; and seasonably, and with compassion calls to them, saying, Be of good cheer, It is I. From the whole, the observation I shall make, is this.

When believers are ready to fink under their troubles, 'tis the most powerful argument to their relief, to have Christ seasonably coming in, and say-

ing to them, It is I.

In speaking to this, what I design is to shew, I. Whence it is, that even real believers may

be ready to fink under their troubles.

II. That what Christ spake to his disciples now, when they were in great distress, he is ready to speak to all his members, whenever they are any of them distressed, Beof good cheer, it is I.

III. What is carried in these comfortable words, and may be gathered from them,

for their support.

1. Whence it is that even believers are apt to

fink under their troubles.

'Tis no uncommon case for gracious souls to be cast down and disquieted under pressing afflictions. Hence we have David complaining, Psalm cxvi. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: 1 found trouble

trouble and forrow. And what a sad conclusion does he make, Psal. xxxi. 22. I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes. And the prophet Jeremiab uses the same language, as speaking in the name of the afflicted church, Lam. iii. 17, 18. Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace, &c. I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. Again, the Psalmist speaks thus, Psalm lxxvii. 2, 3. My soul refused to be comforted. My spirit was overwhelmed. Selab.

As to the causes of our despondence in general. It may be, we have not thought of the cross as we ought, or not counted upon it at all, and so have taken little care to prepare for it. Perhaps from our being long spared, we promised ourselves an exemption from any remarkable trials: or perhaps we mistake the nature, end and design of afflictions when they come, and so are ready to faint under divine rebukes.

But there is a peculiar anguish with which some are overtaken, when they are under the apprehensions of approaching death. Several such I have known (and heard of more) who when they received the sentence of death in themselves, and were brought within view of the grave and another world; who when they selt their souls going to God, to be determined by him for an everlasting state of joy, or misery, could not but discover a deep concern, and even cry out lamentably through sear of the awful change they were about to make. This has been the case even of some, of whose safety we have no reason to doubt. And God knows how it may be with ourselves.

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As to the springs of this:

r. We are too prone to put far from us the evil day. Tho' a faint does not take up his rest upon earth; yet the most make but little haste in preparing for their removal, while they conclude they may have still many years to stay. The wife as well as the foolish virgins slumber and sleep; therefore when the cry is made at midnight, behold the bridegroom cometh, no wonder they are put into a consternation at having the summons given them, to go forth to meet him so much sooner than they expected.

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2. Death may find us in the dark as to our title to the life to come, or meetness for it. And how sad is it to think of going out of this world when we have no evidence that we shall enter into a better? If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable. And can I, O my soul! say, my hope extends farther? There is a ransom for sinners sound, but I am not clear as to an interest in it: there is a heaven provided, but I am sorely assaid I shall never be admitted to enter into it. I have had time to make my calling and election sure, but how much am I still in doubt about it! and O the overwhelming view I have of eternity, while I know not into which state in it I am going, and yet have time allowed me no longer

3. Conscience in our last hours may be awakened to revive the sense of past sins, and so may encrease our horrors and terrors. Upon searching their hearts, under the apprehension that they are going to judgment, how much cor-

to stay on this fide of it.

ruption

ruption may even faints find there, which, because of its strength, they may be apt to fear was never mortissed? and this fills them with doubts, whether it was ever pardoned. And who can think without horror, of going unpardoned and unrenewed to appear before God? laden with sin, and so liable to destruction? and how many aggravations of sin are now brought to remembrance, more than were discovered in time of health? how long and black the catalogue? and if God should mark iniquity, how can they answer him for one sin of a thousand?

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4. Satan sometimes joins in with an awakened conscience, to make the trial the more fore. As saints are going out of his dominions, he will, as far as permitted, make them seel his malice. He knows he cannot follow them to heaven; and therefore will endeavour, if he can, to send them mourning thither. If they escape him now, he knows they are out of his reach for ever; and therefore the last conflict he enters into with the saints, is often the sharpest.

When the eye of conscience is open, Satan will paint sin before it in the blackest colours, to make the deeper wound. The sins that in life he tempted us to, he will upbraid us with at death; that if he can't rob a saint of his grace, he may of his comfort and peace; and tos him with a tempest, if he cannot run him upon a rock. How much have some endured in their last moments from that malicious enemy? how difficult have they sound it to bear up against him?

Lastly, God sometimes withdraws the light of H 2 his

his countenance: and how deplorable is the case that the soul must then be in!

If God be for us, who can be against us? If he speak peace, who can give trouble? But when we apprehend him in a dying hour, turning away his eye in displeasure, or looking on us with a frown; afflicting us as an enemy, as we think, and sending death to snatch us away in wrath, what wonder if fear moves us to cry out?

And who could keep from fainting, did not Christ seasonably interpose, saying by his word and Spirit, be of good cheer, it is I.

To proceed to the fecond thing.

II. What Christ thus speaks for the relief of his present disciples, belongs to all the rest of his servants. He is equally related to all his: both he that sanctisieth, and they which are sanctisied, are all of one. They who are gone before us, and such as come after us, have the same Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, I Cor. i. 2. Their souls are known to him; their sufferings regarded by him: for we have not an high Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our insirmities. And as he has a tender sense of what they suffer; so he is concerned for their safety, and thus bespeaks them in common, whatever be their case, be of good cheer, it is I. This leads us to consider

III. What is carried in the argument here used, and what the servants of Christ may gather from it, for their support.

In general, it notes his presence with them, and his wisdom, power, faithfulness and love to

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be engaged for them. In every state and condition of life, and in whatever they may be called to, he stands by them; and would have them know, and believe it, and observe, and trust, and rely upon him in and under all: as if he expressly said these words to them, Let not your bearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. i. e. Think me not lost when unseen by you; nor mistake me for an enemy in any of my dealings with you. In whatever way I treat you, be of good cheer, it is I.

The confideration of this, may greatly tend to our relief under all that he will take from us, or lay upon us. When he calls to the doubting distressed Christian, saying, be of good cheer, it is I, Faith hath therein enough to calm and quiet the soul. 'Tis the Lord that speaks: and so,

1. 'Tis one that hath an unquestionable right to take from me, or lay upon me, or do with me, what he pleases. His dominion is founded upon paying the price of his blood for me; and as I am not my own, whatever he does, my part is not to dispute, but humbly to acquiesce.

2. 'Tis Christ that invites our regard to him under every dispensation, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. and he hath testified his love to us by laying down his life for us; and as he doth all things well, having loved his own, he loveth them to the end. The persuasion of both these, both his wisdom and love, may well banish our fears, and lead us chearfully to resign our wills to his.

3. 'Tis he that steps forth and offers himself H 3 to

to our notice, faying, it is I; one who hath purchased heaven for his believing followers, and is preparing them for it, and in the best way conducting them to it. When he left the world, he told his disciples, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. And I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myfelf, that where I am there ye may be also. And whatever methods he will use for this, it should be enough for his friends to hear him fay, it is I; confidering, billion of I

4. He that thus speaks has moreover faid, what I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter, John xiii. 7. He hath glorious defigns to ferve by all the dispensations of his providence; and as all things shall work together for good to them that love God, the day is coming when they shall be abundantly satisfied,

that they have done for

ne, what he pleafes. 5. In Christ, who here speaks, all the promifes of God are Yea and Amen; and he has bid his disciples to ask what they will in his name, and he will do it. He ever lives to fave to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Upon fuch grounds as these, how much is there in these few words of Christ, to support his followers whilst they live, and to keep them from fainting when he bids them die? Be of good cheer, the end. The perfusion of both thefe, I leinti

It is I, your only and all-sufficient Redeemet, on whom your help is laid, and whose business and delight it is to fuccour and fave.

It is I, who died, the just for the unjust, that

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I might bring you to God; and who have undertaken that you shall not miscarry or lose your way.

It is I, who can bestow whatever you need, and deliver you from all your fears, and keep what you have committed to me against that day, the day of my coming to judgment.

It is I, who live, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of

bell and of death, Rev. i. 18.

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Fear not to go down into the grave, I will be with thee, and furely bring thee up again. By my dying and rifing again, I have turned the grave into a bed of rest; disarmed death of its sting, and destroyed him that had the power of it, that is the devil; in order to deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. The sting of death is sin: but be of good cheer, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions. The strength of sin is the law: but I was made under it, and bare its curse, and made way for a blessing to descend upon all that believe in me.

Behold my hands and my feet; fee what I have fuffered, and never doubt whether or no

justice is satisfied.

I am he that went thro' death and the grave to heaven; and told you, that tho' you could not follow me now, you should follow me afterwards. Look upon death as my messenger, to convey you, not to an enemy, or a stranger, or an unknown God, but to be with me where I am, to behold my glory. Be not afraid, it is I.

H 4

It is I, who never yet failed any that trusted me, and am the same yesterday, and to day, and

for ever.

It is I, who am the refurrection and the life, with whom is hid your life in God; and tho you lay down your bodies in the dust, when I who am your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with me in glory.

A few words by way of Use shall close all.

1. Are believers themselves so ready to sink under their burdens, what then can bear up the hearts of others? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner ap-

pear?

2. Seeing 'tis Christ's voice alone that can comfort the foul, how defirable is an interest in him, and how earnestly should we labour after it? Arife, O drooping foul, weary and heavy laden; and go to him; behold he calleth thee, what should discourage thee and keep thee back? Art thou guilty? the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all fin. Art thou unworthy? he hath brought in an everlafting righteousness. thou weak? his grace is fufficient for thee. thy fins many and great, and highly aggravated? Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the fins of the world. Christ is come to feek and to fave that which was lost, the chief of sinners. And as you can't but think this grateful to you, and worthy of all acceptation; fo 'tis equally true, and one of the faithful fayings of God. Christ hath faved ten thousands already, and is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever; able

able to fave to the uttermost those that come

unto God by him.

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Pray for the Spirit of grace to persuade and enable you to do this: and as sleeing for refuge to him on whom your help is laid, may you be witnesses to his faithfulness, in saying, that him that cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out.

Lastly, Let the disciples of Christ in all his dealings with them, dismiss their fears at his

kind reviving voice, it is I.

It is I, who have all your times in my hand,

and your fafety as to both worlds, at heart.

It is I, whose power is over all things in heaven and earth, and that power is by unchangeable love engaged for you: and if this be enough to your comfort, be of good cheer, it is I, who call you now by my Gospel to receive the benefit of it, further and further.

It is 1, who am entrusted with you, and may be trusted by you, as your nearest, best, and everlasting friend. In the multitude of your thoughts within you, by reason of the trouble you have in the world, while you live be assured you shall have peace in me, and after your death you shall find your heaven with me. Consider who it is that speaks thus, and be of good cheer, for it is I.

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SERMON VII.

enable you to do thus; and as declared or refuse

LEVIT. X. 3. Last Clause.

And Aaron held his peace.

THESE words shew the becoming behaviour of a servant of God under a very great and sore affliction, who, thro' the affistance of grace, stilled the murmurings of nature,

and replied nothing against God.

The people of God have no promise of exemption from trials either personal or relative; but when they act like themselves, they meet them with a different behaviour from others, so as that the darkest dispensations prove occasions for their graces to shine forth the brighter, to the glory of their author. And the instances of this recorded in scripture, are not merely to be talked of, but followed, seeing we are to take the Prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. James v. 11. And the words I have read, point us to one who is called a Prophet, Exod. vii. 1. who under a fore affliction did not murmur or dispute, but beld his peace.

We have here.

and fervant of the Lord, dignified with the priesthood, and called to minister before him.

2. The case he was in: deprived of two sons at once, which were cut off in an awful manner; a fire from the Lord, devoured them for presuming to offer strange fire, and they died before the Lord, verse 2.—His case was sad, and such as he could not but be nearly touched and affected with.

3. We see his behaviour under the stroke, as heavy as it was, be held his peace, and was silent under what God had done to his sons, and thereby to him.

4. The ground of this, viz. what Moses had fignified to him, which was that God had acted according to his word, and for the advancement

of his glory in what he had done.

Then Moses said unto Aaron, this is that which the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified: upon which it follows, and Aaron held his peace, this silenced him.

Doct. It is a temper that becomes a child of God under the forest afflictions, to be silent before

bim.

Thus it was with Aaron, he was forely afflicted, and his afflictions were caused by his children, I was dumb and opened not my mouth; because thou didst it, Psalms xxxix. 9.

Now confidering what was done, and what befel him, with his carriage under it, our work

will be to fhew these things.

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I. That even a child of God may be exercifed with fore trials and afflictions.

II. What is implied in being filent under

them.

III. What confiderations may help to work the foul to fuch a temper as this.

Which will lead to the application.

I. Even a child of God may be exercifed with fore trials and afflictions, that may lie very heavy upon him. David complains, Thy band presset me fore, Psalm xxxviii. 2. And, Job saith, he, i. e. God, multiplieth my wounds, Job. ix. 17. Besides what may be laid directly upon themselves, in their own souls and bodies, they may be grievously afflicted by the sufferings and death of such as are near and dear to them. God may take away their children in the prime of their time (as was the case of Job and of Aaron here) and hide them out of sight, in a silent grave.

The greatest savourites of heaven have had their trials in their way thither. If their day has for a while been bright, and calm, how soon has it been overcast and russed by troubles, inward or outward, personal or relative, the death of such as are nearest to them, or by diseases in themselves, the sad forerunners of their own death, which they must at last yield to. We, saith the Apostle, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened. And what wonder, if the children of God meet with trials upon earth, where they were never promised, nor could rationally expect their rest? What wonder, if they are often, and when

need is, grievously afflicted; seeing they so often sin, and procure the evils under which they groan? All this is consistent with the love of a father, and our relation to him; with his remembrance of his covenant, and faithfulness to it; with the death and intercession of Christ, and our interest in both, and the great things we may from thence expect in a better world.

The satisfaction which Christ hath made to his father in behalf of his children and chosen, to open a passage for them into the everlasting kingdom, leaves it still in his power, to take from them, or lay upon them what he pleases, as to temporal things; and to deal with them, with respect to these, as may be most subservient to his own glory, and their eternal blessedness. There is therefore no room to entertain an hard thought of God, nor should we faint when rebuked of him.

God knows the glory he designs to bring his people to, and the part they are to act, and the evils they are to suffer, and what will most conduce to their safety in the way to heaven. In the judgment of his unerring wisdom, they are not lest to be in heaviness, but when need is, either for mortifying and keeping down corruption, or for the trial and exercise of grace, or for weaning them from the present world; where their desires are often disappointed, their hopes dashed, their comforts imbittered, or snatched away, to set them more earnestly a longing after heaven, their remaining and everlasting rest. The ransomed of the Lord may go on mourning in their way to Zion; the' they

shall affuredly arrive there, with overlasting joy upon their heads, where sorrow and sighing shall

flee away, one risiw med thoo si side

That very description of heaven may tell the heirs of it what to expect on earth. There God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: but these are things they are to reckon upon as to be met with, in the way, and as what they are to prepare themselves to go thro'.

II. What is implied in being filent under the trials, God fees fit at any time to exercise us

is to temporal things; and to deal with ? driw

Here let me premise, to prevent mistake,

these following instructions, grole ave aid of the

1. "Tis not a filence that proceeds from carelesness or unconcernedness about what we suffer, nor a disregarding from what hand our afflictions come, and on what errand, or for what end they come. Such a silence would be a despising of the chastening of the Lord; which is a temper of spirit we are warned against, Heb. xii. 5.

2. 'Tis not a filence that proceeds from pride, and disdain of being thought to feel, or be mov-

ed, by what we fuffer! as lain salt id to noil

Tis not a filence arising from sullenness and daring obstinacy, when the perverse spirit hardens itself against God: such was their temper, whom the prophet describes, Jer. v. 3. Thou has stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction, &c.

4. Nor

4. Nor is it the filence of a foul abandoning itself to grief under affliction, and to lose all sense and relish of any remaining mercy: This is the other extream to fainting under God's rebukes.

5. To be filent under God's afflicting hand, does not exclude a just fense of what we suffer. Whenever God strikes, he expects we should feel, and be deeply affected with his dealing with us.

6. Prayer to God under affliction is well confistent with filence before him, and the way to it; as it is by help from him, that we come to be refigned to his will, which help is to be

fetch'd in by prayer.

7. Being filent does not exclude the opening our case to our friends, and calling in the affist-ance of their counsels and prayers. Have pity upon me, saith Job, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touch'd me, Job xix. 21.

Having premised these to clear our way: Being silent as we ought, under any trial or afflic-

tion, includes these things.

I. A deep fense of God's hand in what we suffer. This was the Ground of David's silence. Psalm xxxix. 9. I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. And Hezekiah mourning, directs his eye to God and heaven. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it, Isa. xxxviii. 15. Affiction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: But God has the ordering of all things that come upon men. This he proclaims, Isa. xlv. 7. I

form the light, and create darkness: I make peace. and create evil, I the Lord do all thefe things. There is nothing that befals us by chance. nor as undetermined by him; tho' it may not be foreseen by us. Whatever second causes or occasions of evils may be affigned by men, this interrogation is put to challenge a peculiar regard to be had to God's hand, Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord bath not done it? Amos iii. 6. He orders what particular trial or affliction shall befal this or that particular person. God has appointed the bounds of every man's habitation, and knows where to fend his messengers to find him out. No disease can come nigh our dwellings, or feize upon any therein, but as ordered by him. And it is he that makes a distinction in his providence, not only between one house and another in the fame neighbourhood; but among fuch as live under the same roof, when one is taken, and another left.

All the circumstances of every affliction come under his determination, as to time and place, manner and iffue. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up, Samuel ii. 6. One is seized with a threatning difease, and suddenly removed: Another, whose life long hung in suspense, and seemed to be past hope, is again recover'd. God is the fupreme orderer of all this; for he takes away, or restores as he sees good. A believing regard to his hand in our affliction, is one thing implied in being filent under them. loon and sint .nem 2. It

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2. It includes a subscribing to God's justice in all his dealings with us, that his ways are equal, and that whatever he takes from us or lays upon us, we dare not to conclude the worse of him in our thoughts, or to open our mouths against him. Thus being filent is oppos'd to self justification, as being convinced that he hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve. Let us, every one of us in particular, say when we are afflicted, Lord, how much soever I have to say against myself, I have nothing to say against thee: Thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works.

3. It includes a refigning ourselves to God, as having the most unquestionable dominion over us, and right to do with us and ours as seeemeth good in his sight. Behold he taketh away who can binder him? who can say unto him,

what dost thou? Job iii. 12.

4. Lastly, It includes resting in his pleasure, as that which is wisest and best; in opposition to murmuring and impatience, inward frets and discomposure of soul. Whatever God does is well done: and to consent and agree to it, and heartily to fall in with it with this sense of soul, not my will, but thine be done; This belongs to the temper we are inquiring into.

Let every one of us in particular, when afflicted, fay, God does all by unerring counsels for the best ends: and though I am not able to account for every dispensation of providence, 'tis the homage I owe him, to believe that he can never be mistaken or take a wrong step; that all things shall work together for good

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to them that love God, the heaviest afflictions not excepted; and that what I know not now, I shall know afterward. Doth God say, I'll lessen thy family, take away this or the other child, or relation? His will shall determine mine: I would not dispute with him, but ressign. What seemeth good in his sight, shall not be call'd, or thought, evil in mine. The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. However a child of God may be afflicted by him, thus it becomes him to hold his peace from murmuring, and to be silent altogether in that sense.

This leads to the

III. General, viz. What confiderations may help to work the foul of a child of God into so desirable a frame, as to be mute when God's afflicting hand may be most pressing upon him. The reasonableness of this frame may appear,

1. From God's unquestionable right to dispose of us and ours, as he pleases. When it is his will which is done upon us, his sovereignty should teach his creatures to be silent. Rom. ix. 21, 22. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over his clay? We are in his hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter. Job ix. 12. Behold he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what dost thou? He giveth no account of any of his matters: and what presumption would it be for a poor worm, to call the Most High to his bar? He takes no more than he first gave; and we missian.

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take the nature of our tenure, if we think, he

may not call for his own, when he will.

2. It should teach us to be filent in whatever instance God afflicts; as 'tis he that continues to us many other mercies, which have been all forfeited, and which might as justly have been removed, as those he hath taken away. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not confumed, because his compassions fail not. What shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? Must God favour us with an uninterrupted prosperity upon earth? Or shall we grow impatient if he does not? shall we break with our maker upon the account of what we fuffer from him, after we have been fo highly favour'd by him, and stand so many wavs obliged to him? He has done, can do. and will do fo much good to us, to overballance all the afflictive evils he lays upon us, that we may well filence all murmurings against him.

3. We ought to be filent under what God will have us suffer, as considering we have many ways sinned and offended against him. This may well strike us dumb from making any objections, and dispose us to lie down in silence before him, saying with Job, Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no farther, Job xl. 4, 5. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more, Job xxxiv. 31. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned

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against bim, Mich. vii. 9. He will not lay upon man more than is right, Job xxxiv. 23. Nay, in all we fuffer we must say, 'tis less than our ini-

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quities deserve, Ezra ix. 18.

4. We have reason to be filent, as considering that all God's dispensations, how afflictive foever, are conducted by unerring wisdom to his own glory. And if God be glorified, why should we be diffatisfied? The Lord is a God of judgment: bleffed are all that wait for him, Ifa. xxx. 18. It was upon this ground that Aaron was mute, when both his fons, in fo awful a way, were struck dead: It being told him, this is that the Lord Spake, Saying, I will be Sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the peo-

ple I will be glorified, Aaron beld his peace.

Now had Aaron given full scope for his natural affections to work, the cutting off of his two eldest sons at once, and suddenly by fire sent out from the Lord upon them, for their rash and unadvised action of offering strange fire upon the altar of incense, which the Lord had not commanded, might have moved him to murmur against the justice of God, as too severe. But Aaron did not, but with an humble and fubmissive filence adored God, who chose to glorify himself, by inflicting this stroke of justice upon his two prefumptuous fons that followed their own will, and not his in his worship. The children of God should labour like as Aaron did, to have their minds and wills brought to confent with God's, even in his judgments; and to fay, righteous be thou, O Lord, in judging as thou hast done; tho' at the same time some related to themfelves

felves may have fallen under heavy ones in this world; and (as they fometimes may fear) heavier in the other.

They that now can hardly with any compofure, bear the thoughts of any dear to them, that have been taken away in their fins, should ask themselves, why they should be more disquieted for some of their particular relations, that they fear are lost, than for the multitudes that are every week cut off, without giving any comfortable sign that a saving change was wrought

in them before it happened?

When any are gone out of our world, to their own master, they stand or fall. Instead of tormenting ourselves therefore, about the future flate of others, let us heartily blefs God, if we are instances of his distinguishing grace ourselves, and have honeftly endeavoured the recovery of fuch as we stood related to, while they were with us in a state of trial. Indeed the best of us have reason for sorrow, that we did no more for the conversion and falvation of wicked relations. But if we have found mercy to be faithful to our own fouls, and fincerely to concern ourselves for the salvation of the souls of others, we may take comfort that the day of our compleat redemption is drawing nigh, when, not in our destruction, but falvation for ever, God will be glorified.

As to all trials whatever, which we meet with on earth, God knows how to bring good out of their evil, and how to make our present sufferings turn to our future advantage. Tho' clouds and darkness are round about him, righteous-

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ness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Good old Jacob passionately complained, Joseph is not, and Simeon is not : and when Benjamin was going from him into the utmost danger, as he thought, All these things, said be, are against me; when in the issue, they all made for him. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; but as far above them as the heavens are higher than the earth. And as all things shall work together for good to them that love God; fo the day is coming, when they shall be abundantly satisfi-

ed by feeing how they did fo.

5. The people of God have reason to be filent under every affliction he brings upon them; confidering he hath made with them an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and fure, which is fufficient to be all their falvation, and is all their defire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Tho' he visit their iniquities with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes, he declares nevertheless, his loving kindness be will not utterly take from them, nor fuffer his faithfulness to fail: and they need not fink, whatever earthly comfort is removed, or evil inflicted, who have God left them, and all the promifes of the covenant fure to them.

The APPLICATION.

1. Is it a temper becoming the children of God to be filent under what they fuffer from him? what reason have the most to be humble for their defectiveness herein? How ready are we to murmur and repine at God's dealings with us or ours? to grow impatient under the rod, and quarrel with the hand that lays it on? when God contends with us, how apt are we by tumultuating

multuating fretful thoughts, or by open com-

plaints, to contend with him?

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Tho' man's opposing God is the way to kindle his anger against us; yet our common proneness to this is intimated in the apostle's question, I Cor. x. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

As to the springs of this,

1. Too great ignorance of God and ourfelves, leads to impatience under his hand, and fo to opposing our wills to his. Did we really consider, what we are, from whom we suffer, against whom we repine: surely sinful dust and ashes would never entertain an hard Thought of God, or open their mouths against him. 'Tis because men do not know or consider what they are, and have deferved, by whose hand they suffer, and for what cause and end, that they are apt to quarrel with their maker, and murmur against him, as if he did them wrong. But when God shews himself in clearer light, and brings them better to know their state, how foon are all complaints struck dumb, and humble confessions take their place? Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, Jer. xxxi. 18. surely it is meet to be said to God, that which I see not, teach thou me; If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more, Job xxxiv. 31, 32. This is the language of the afflicted church, when confidering the ground and cause of her suffering, I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against bim, Mic. vii. 9.

2. Want or weakness of love to God, makes it difficult in patience to possess our souls under his afflicting hand. When things are at the worst with him, one that is filled with love to God, will put the best sense on the saddest Providence. If he is afflicted, he will place his affliction to the faithfulness of God, and believe that he designs to do him good.

The more we love God, at the greater distance shall we keep from fretting and impatience. Instead of indulging repining thoughts against him, we shall every one be led to say:

Let him take from me what he will, let him smite me in what part he will; so he

' do but love me, I will never contend with him; and lay upon me what he pleases, so

' he continues to love me, I have reason to ac-

' quiesce.'

3. Our desire of a quieter passage through the world, than God hath promised, or sees meet for us, often betrays us to impatience when brought into trouble. Christ plainly tells all that will be saved, what they are to expect, Matth. xvi. 24. If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me. And every Christian consents to this; but lives too little under the powerful consideration of his engagements. The same slesh that would be pleased, will grudge when it is crossed and pained. The less we expect and prepare for the cross, the harder it will be to meet it, and bear it with the temper we ought.

4. Even the children of God converse too seldom with the heavenly glory; and hence are so

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apt to be discomposed under what they suffer in the way to it. Did they often look by faith to what God hath laid up for them that love him, and consider that all things shall work together for their good, to prepare them for it, and bring them to it, they would reckon, that the light afflictions of the present life, are not worthy to be compared to the glory to be revealed: but when, under what they feel, they forget both the love from whence it springs, and whither it tends, no wonder unbecoming thoughts are apt to arise in them, and vent themselves in impatient complaints.

The best are prone to give way to impatience under great afflictions: but how much reason

have they to be humbled for it?

1. As it is unbecoming a child of God, confidered as such, or as a new creature.

2. As it is great and dangerous presumption.

- 3. As it is contrary to our covenant engagements.
- 4. As it is inconfistent with our own prayers.
- 5. As it brings us under the charge of ingratitude to our best benefactor and friend.
- 1. To be impatient under affliction is unbecoming a child of God, confidered as a new creature. If God in the most endeared relation, is become our father, and has put us among his children, we are bound by this relation to submit to him: and how strange must it be for any of this number to murmur or repine, where the most intire resignation is due? Saints are in a peculiar manner formed for God's praise; to obey

obey his revealed will, and rest in his disposing will: and therefore, for such to fret against him, is to go cross to the end for which they were created anew.

2. To oppose our wills to the will of God is high presumption; and both provoking to God, and dangerous to ourselves, Isa. xlv. 9. Wo unto him that striveth with his maker: let the potsherd

strive with the potsherds of the earth.

3. 'Tis contrary to our covenant engagements. When we yielded ourselves to God, did we not expresly agree, that he should lead us to heaven, and that we would follow him thro' what way he pleased to shew us; thro' feas or wildernesses, or thro' any, even the roughest paths, so he brought us safe to the promifed land. Did we not engage to follow our bleffed Lord, and to be conformed to him? to run the race that was fet before us, looking unto him, who not only veiled his glory, but at his Father's command laid down his life for us; going as a lamb to the flaughter, and as a Theep before the shearers, dumb, and not opening his mouth? Would not impatience under any of God's dealings with us, be contrary to all this?

At our conversion, when we were filled with the sense of sin, and the searful apprehensions of eternal wrath, and were slying to God in Christ for refuge, how light did we reckon the sorest trials that would befal us on earth, in comparison of the loss of heaven, and our enduring the torments of hell?

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How readily did we consent that God should take from us, or lay upon us what he pleased, fo he freed us from the burden of fin, and from the wrath to come, and gave us an interest in Christ, thro' whom we might obtain salvation with eternal glory? Was not this the sense of our hearts, expressed some way by our tongues? Lord, I this day take thee to be my King and my God, and intirely give up myself unto thee, to be no longer my own, but thine: at all times to be at thy disposal, and in every thing to acquiesce in thy good pleasure. Do what thou wilt with me and mine, in this world; fo thou bring me to thy presence at last, and I am, I will be fatisfied. Who that has spoken to this purpose, can give way to impatience under the hand of God, and be innocent?

- 4. Impatience under affliction is inconfistent with our own prayers. Submission to the will of God is, or ought to be, our daily request, and especially under such trials. Lord, keep me (should we pray) from murmuring at these, or any of thy dealings with me: not my will, but thine be done. And how unbecoming would it be, for one that has been thus praying to God, after this to give way to repining against him?
- 5. 'Twould bring us under the charge of ingratitude to our best benefactor and friend. Has God heard my main prayer, and drawn me to Christ? pardoned my sin, and given me the privilege of being numbered among his children?

124 The Seventh Sermon.

dren? and yet, if he lays his hand upon me in this or the other instance, shall I by my complaints drown all the remembrance of his former loving kindness and grace? Moreover, how unspeakable is the blessedness prepared above, into which Christ is entered as the forerunner to all his believing members? and what a slight should we put on the remaining everlasting rest, should we repine at present sufferings, which are so soon to issue in endless joy?

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SERMON VIII.

GENESIS XLL36.

And Jacob their Father Said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: All these things are against me.

THESE are the words of holy Jacob in great perplexity and diffress; the occasion of which we are acquainted with in the foregoing verses of this chapter.

There being a great famine in Canaan, and corn in Egypt, Jacob sends ten of his sons down into Egypt to buy corn, keeping Benjamin the

youngest with him.

The Egyptians, the feed of accursed Ham, had plenty, while Jacob and his family were in want, in the promised land: to teach them to seek a better country, that is the heavenly, and not to measure God's special love or hatred, by what he gives or withholds of these outward things, Heb. xi. 14, 15.

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Upon their coming to Egypt, and into their brother Joseph's presence, now the governour over the land, they bowed before him, and so fulfilled his dream, which, at his first telling it to them, they heard with so much indignation; and afterwards sold him to some Ishmaelitish merchants, on purpose to prevent its being sulfilled, Chap. xxxvii. 28. But providence can promote and serve its designs, by the very methods, by which vain men may think to clog or hinder them.

Joseph knew his brethren, tho' he was unknown to them: and to bring them to repentance for their past fin, and at the same time get out of them an account of the state of their family, he carried it roughly towards them, verfe 7. He strictly examined them, and charged them as spies; and shut them up in prison, where they were kept three days, verse 17. but at last released them; and agreed that one of them should be bound, and detained in prison, as an hostage, and the rest should go and carry corn to their father and families, and fetch Benjamin to be a proof of the truth of the account they had given of their family; and as the only condition on which they were to expect any fayour from him.

Upon their return to Canaan, they relate to their father all that had befallen them; and that Simeon was left bound behind, and Benjamin fent for, whom they must carry with them; or the brother could not be released, nor the Lord of the country's face any more be seen.

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Jacob moved with the fad account, breaks out into the complaint in the text, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. He concluded Joseph to be dead, and looked upon Simeon as loft; in both which he was mistaken. And the thoughts of parting with Benjamin cut him to the heart, as if it were to fend him to the grave : and therefore he cries out, All these things are against me. But Foseph was fafe and in honour; Benjamin would be so too, and well received; Simeon would be set free; all the family would be kindly entertained; and the father fent for to be nourished by his beloved fon. and thus all was making for his comfort and advantage, that appeared so black and difmal, and from whence he expected nothing but ruin. And as good old Jacob was not to be alone, either as to his present fears, or his happy mistake in the issue, the plain obfervation I would make, is this.

Doct. A child of God may hastily conclude those things to be against him that at last shall be

found to be most for him.

In speaking to this, I shall shew:

I. That God's dealings with his people, even when he is working their deliverance, and defigns their good, are often dark and intricate.

II. Whence it is that they are ready to judge, that those things are against them, which

are really making for them.

III. How it may be concluded, that what the people of God apprehend to be against gainst them, shall, in the issue, make really for them.

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IV. Why God chuses to carry on his peoples good in such a way.

Lastly, the application.

I. God's dealings with his people, even when he is working their dediverance, and defigning their good, are often dark and intricate, feeming to make more against them than for them. Thus it was with Jacob now. God defigned the prefervation of him and his family in Egypt, by Joseph's advancement there: but how unlikely

was the method he took in order to it?

Toleph is first sold for a slave, then reported to his father to be flain; and concluded to be fo, being not heard of for many years. A famine necessitates Jacob to send to Egypt for Corn; but upon their return, his fons reported they had been suspected as spies, and under that suspicion three days imprison'd. They tell Jacob now, when they were come back, that one of their number was left behind, as an hostage for their going down again; and that whenever they went, Benjamin his darling, in whose life his own feemed to be bound up, must be ventured into a land wherein they had been so roughly handled. How dark and melancholy does all this feem? how little likely to be tending to Jacob's advantage? and yet in the iffue it did, and God all along defigned it should. It was all but a contrivance of love and mercy, in the carrying on of which, God knew his thoughts to be thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give an expected end; indeed one beyond expectation

pectation. After all Jacob's fears for Simeon and Benjamin, he received them both safe; and heard with joy, of Joseph's being alive, and in honour, whom he apprehended long before to be torn in pieces, and he was himself with all his family preserved there: but while Simeon was in bonds, and Benjamin, with the rest of his children were a going to him, his fears made him speak, as one going then to be bereaved of all his children, and thereby to be undone.

Thus it was in the deliverance of Ifrael from Egypt, 430 years after. God faw the affliction of his people there, and heard their cry, and refolved to fet them free: but upon his fending Moses to speak to Pharoab for that end, their tasks were doubled, and they made to groan under harder bondage; so that their case was worse. And they expostulated with Moses and Aaron upon it, Exod. v. 21. And they said unto them, the Lord look upon you and judge; because ye have made our favour to be abborred in the eyes of Pharoah, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us. And Moses spreads the same complaint before the Lord, saying, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? for fince I came to Pharoah to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

After they were brought a little on their way out of Egypt, their danger was increased. Pharoah with an enraged army marched after them, and overtook them, for whom they were no match. The sea was before them, and on either

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hand mountains that forbad their flight or escape. How, to appearance, did all things work towards their destruction? and yet this was the way God took to bring about their deliverance, by opening the sea to give them passage, and drowning their enemies, who ventured to follow them.

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Thus it was as to Daniel and the three Hebrew worthies: God resolved to deliver and save them; but the way in which he chose to do it, was by suffering the first to be cast into the lions den, and the others into the fiery surnace, and yet by keeping both unhurt, to the consustion of

their enemies.

David was defigned for a throne and anointed to it: but before he reached it, he was driven from place to place, as a partridge upon the mountains; and reduced to that distress, as that he seemed to throw up all his hopes, and concluded his case desperate, I Sam. xxvii. I. Ishall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. So strange were the proceedings of Providence towards him, that he began to doubt of the truth of the promises made to him; instead of reigning, he seemed to be threatned with unavoidable ruin. I shall not escape, I shall one day perish.

Such also were God's dealings with Job: he resolves to bless Job's latter end more than his beginning. But how unlikely a way to this does it seem, to be first stripped of all, and reduced to the deepest distress? to be plundered by his enemies, censured by his friends, have God write bitter things against him, and Satan let loose in the forest manner to afflict him? and who that had seen him in his low condition, could have

thought that the iffue aim'd at in the eye of the Lord, with reference to him, should have been

fo bright and bleffed?

Thus God's dealing with his fervants have often a fad aspect, as if he was set on their destruction, when he is confulting their truest advantage, and promoting their falvation. Verily he is a God that hideth himself, when he is at the same time the God of Israel, the Saviour: wraps himself in clouds and darkness, before he shines through to their comfort; and when he answers their prayers, it is by terrible things in righteoufnefs, in a way that fills them with trembling and fear, and makes them fay, My comforts are withdrawn, and I am greatly afflicted; pained in body, and wounded in spirit; molested by Satan, reproached and abused by the world, and have not that relief I once experienc'd in looking up to heaven, &c. All these things are against me. But this leads to the

II. Thing, or to shew whence it is that a child of God may be ready to conclude, that to

be against him, which is really for him.

(1.) This proceeds from their weakness of faith, as to God's wisdom and power, faithfulness and love. God's people are flow of heart to believe, that he is able to bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness; that he hath hidden defigns to ferve by all his dealings with his fervants, which he knows how to bring about, and will not fail to do, in the appointed way and time; which are always to be left to him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Did we really believe that God has the directing

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recting and ordering of all that befalls every one of his people; that that God whom we are peculiarly related to, and beloved by, and can do whatever he pleases, and always will do what is best, we should not be hasty to conclude under our crosses, that all things make against us. If we are of the number of God's children, and have good hope concerning it, there is no ground to say from his dealings with us, that all, or any of them are against us. It is through weakness of faith, that any such complaints are uttered.

(2.) A faint is apt to fay of what befalls him, all these things are against me, as looking to Providence, and judging by it abstracted from his Promise.

The Promise saith, and God in it, All things shall work together for good to them that love God. Now were all his dispensations viewed in this light, in conjunction with so gracious a word, and as sent to sulfil it, the complaint of their being against us could have no place.

(3.) A child of God may fay of what befalls him, all these things are against me, judging by

sense.

The body, when afflicted or pained, will feel and complain: And as no affliction is for the prefent joyous, but grievous; so it is the language of fense, that all these things are against us: but faith will bring in another verdict, viz. Let slesh and sense say what it will, truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.

(4.) What a Saint thus fpeaks, 'tis as looking down to the prefent world, and his interest in it.

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When this is chiefly regarded, that which tends to lessen our comforts in it, may be thought to make against us: But that which is contrary to our temporal welfare may promote our everlasting. That may be for us, as to eternity, which

may feem against us in time.

(5). Saints may fay of God's dealings, they are against them, as speaking through rashness, and viewing only a part of his work, and not staying to the end; as looking upon it while it looks black and frightful, and not staying till the end, when God shall have finished it, and laid the whole before them, and when it shall appear plainly that all and every part was greatly for them.

Jacob, that so passionately cries out at this time upon Simeon's being in Egypt, and Benjamin's going thither, all these things are against me, is soon after convinced of his mistake. The people of God, after some sore affliction, under which they greatly complained, may even be afterwards satisfy'd, 'twas much for their advantage: but however, what they know not now, they shall hereafter be acquainted with, and fully satisfied in.

(6.) Saints, under the trials they meet with, may be tempted to fay, all these things are against us, as not duly attending to the method of God's dealing with his people, and their own and others experience of the happy purposes he has served by it.

'Tis God's way to inrich his people, by making them poor; to heal by wounding, and making them fick; to quicken them in the way

to heaven, and better prepare them for it, by all the *sufferings* of the present life. And the want of attending to this, is the cause of our proneness to vent complaints of those his dealings with us, which we should otherwise acquiesce in, and shall see reason to be thankful for.

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III. How may it be concluded, that what the people of God apprehend to be against them,

shall in the iffue make really for them?

I. From God's relation to them. He is their God in covenant, their tender Father, and so in a peculiar manner concerned about them: He sees all the trials they meet with, has the ordaining of them; and as he is their God, so are they his people. He will be better to them than their fears; and prevent the evil they may be

apprehensive of.

2. From his Love to them. This is his voice to every one of his people, Since thou wast precious in mine eyes, thou hast been bonourable, and I have loved thee, Isa. xliii. 4. And this love is unchangeable and everlasting, and will employ all his perfections for them, his wisdom, his power, his presence, his care; and if all these together can render what seems against his people, to be for them, it shall be done. And whom it has pleased the Lord to bring into the number of his people, and set his love upon, he will at no time, in no instance leave.

Lastly, From his express promises. He hath undertaken all things shall work together for good to them that love God. The things they are most asraid of, shall have a better issue than they expect. He that dwelleth in the secret place of

the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and there be fafe from fear of evil. Isa. xliii. 1, 2. Thus faith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest thro' the waters, I will be with thee; and thro' the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walketh thro' the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the boly one of Ifrael, thy Saviour.

IV. Why God chooses to carry on his people's good by ways, to appearance, the most dark

and threatning.

That he doth, is plain from Jacob's complaint, compared with the iffue. He may be working our falvation, when we may think he is giving us up to destruction; or to that which we sometimes think to be a judgment, which may yet be a great mercy. The Whale that fwallow'd up Jonah, was a means to bring him to shore: and that trouble which we oftentimes think will swallow us up, may be a means to bring us to an harbour. God's thoughts towards his people may be thoughts of peace to give them an expected end; when, it may be, their hearts are ready to fail, and think their expectation is cut off.

This is the way God chooses,

First, For his own glory. We find this given by our Lord, as the reason of his seemingly strange conduct in the case of Lazarus, John xi. When his fifters fent to tell him that their brother was fick, fick, and entreated him to come and heal him; instead of going presently, he tarries two days in the place where he was, suffering Lazarus to die, and be buried. How ready might Mary, his sister, be to say, All these things are against us: But Christ assigns the reason of them to be the manifestation of the glory of God. The wisdom, power, mercy and faithfulness of God, appeared more illustriously, the greater difficulty they had to work through. In God's delivering us when we are at the end of our thoughts and hopes, and when ready to give up all for lost, then he appears in his glory, a God powerful, wise, merciful, and faithful indeed.

Secondly, This God does, for the trial and dif-

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covery of his people.

(1.) In their corruption: that they may be more fensible of it, and humbled under it. Their pride, passion, unbelief, &c. are given as the reasons of his keeping his people so long in the wilderness, and so variously exercising them there, which seemed to make against them. Deut.viii. 2. The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to bumble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart. God could have convey'd them in a much shorter time from Egypt to Canaan, and preserv'd them from wants and enemies in the way: but he brings them into distresses for the proving of them; not but that God knew them before, but he designed that they should know themselves.

(2.) For the discovery of their graces: either as to their weakness, that they may be labouring after improvement; or as to their strength, that this

this may appear to his honour, and their own comfort. And particularly, when the dispensation of providence seems to make against his people, he tries the strength of their faith in him, their love to him, and of their patience in waiting for him, to see the good issue.

(3.) God carries on his people's good by ways that feem to make against them, to quicken, and make them the more earnest in prayer to him. The more dark and intricate, awful and threatning God's dealings are with us, the more frequent and fervent, earnest and enlarged we should be in prayer to him, that he would appear for us.

(4.) God's proceedings towards his people feem to be defigned for this end, to sweeten and endear the mercy he vouchsafes them, after all their doubtings and fears of the contrary. Mercy in such circumstances will appear to be mer-

cy indeed.

Lastly, God heightens the difficulties that feem to stand in the way of a mercy before us, that we may be enlarged in our thanksgivings for it afterwards. After faceb had said with so dejected an heart, Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and saw Benjamin was a going, and sound himself giving up all for lost; how thankful may we conceive him to be, when he received all safe, and was convinced, how wonderfully God had appeared for him?

After all their straits, when the children of Israel were come safe through the Red Sea, and had been delivered from all dangers that threated their ruin, how sweet was the salvation of God to them? they sung that song in thankful-

ness to him, set down in Exod. xv. Who is like thee, glorious in boliness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? ver. 11.

APPLICATION.

1. Are God's dealings with his fervants feemingly against them, even when he is defigning their good, and working for them? make fure that you are some of the happy number who stand in a special relation to him, as having chosen him in Christ to be your God, and thro' the same beloved, yielded yourselves by covenant to him, to be his for time, and to eternity. And having done this, and renewed your covenant at the table of the Lord; prevent all murmuring and complaints, how difficult foever

may be his dealings with you.

1. Take heed of judging God's purposes of grace by the external dispensations which make way to bring them into effect. If sense would conclude from fuch or fuch steps, that all these things are against you, let faith correct the mistake; and notwithstanding dark aspects, fay, all shall be well with them that fear God. Tho' the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine, and the labour of the olive Shall fail, and the field should yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there Shall be no herd in the stall, and sense say, all these things are against me; yet faith may triumph, and fay, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my falvation.

God may be fulfilling his promises, even

when he feems to go in a contrary way to it. Joseph's being fold and put into prison first, feemed

feemed the contrary way to his advancement: But the promise is often nearest fulfilling, when to an eye of sense it is farthest off it. When God's people have been ready to be overwhelmed with fear, he hath often appeared to their comfort and joy. In the evening time, when least expected, it shall be light. Wherefore,

2. Beg that faith may not fail, when all things of fense seem dark and dismal. Under the forest trials, when the waters swell, and you are ready to fink, believe that the Lord, your God in Christ, your God in covenant, is migh-

tier than many waters.

In every place and difficulty, he can come to us; in the deepest distress he can relieve us: when human help fails, he can do exceeding abundantly more for us, than we can ask or think. He that was with Jacob, and Joseph, and all the children of the kingdom, through the various trials in their way to it, will be with all that belong to him, to the end of the world. He is with them, to counsel them in straits, to support them in forrow, to preserve them in danger, and proportion strength to their day, let it be what it will. Thus he bespeaks every one of his, Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, Isa. xli. 10.

3. Beware of entertaining narrow thoughts of God in the deepest distress. Believe him always the same, whatever changes you meet with.

And therefore,

4. Listen not to what flesh, and sense, or Satan would suggest, derogatory to the power and faithfulness of God. Whatever comfort we had in any creature, 'twas God that made it that to us, that it was: And when any of these are withdrawn, he can make up all in and from himself.

5. Give not way to murmuring or impatience, if what you apprehend to be against you, be not presently turned visibly for your good. The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Hab. ii. 3.

6. Be affured that all God's providences are accomplishing his promises, though you see not

how this will be brought about.

Lastly, Whilst you are so apt to say on earth, That all these things are against me: With the greater earnestness press on towards heaven. And in the light of that world, you will be sully satisfied how all things in the issue were for you, and that all your tears did but prepare you, with the greater relish to enter into that presence of God, where there is sulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

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SERMON IX.

Exodus XXXIII. 18.

And he said, I beseech thee shew me thy Glory.

HESE are the words of Moses: a man fingularly favoured of God, by the manifestation of himself he made to him, and defiring to be more so, and here expressing that

defire, in prayer to him.

Perhaps he might now defire more than was meet for his prefent state, or than he was able to bear; and fo far, his request was denied: for God tells him, ver. 20. Thou can'ft not fee my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. In heaven only, is God's face unveiled, and the brightest manifestations of himself made; and his children must die before they can be admitted to fee it. But tho' all that makes up heaven is not to be seen upon earth, some of it may. The request that Moses here makes, as duly regulated, is graciously answered, He prays, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory: and God answers, I will make all my goodness to pass before thee. As the lxx. render it, it is, I will pass before thee with my glory; i. e. Thou shalt have a transient view of that

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that which thou canst not bear in the sull discovery: thou shalt see enough for thy comfort, and at the same time live and be kept safe. And how the matter was managed in order to this, we find in ver. 21. And the Lord said, behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen. Something of God may be known and enjoyed upon earth, tho' short of what is to be expressed, the more still is desired.

Doct. Such as God has made partakers of his grace, will make it their defire and prayer,

that he would shew them his glory.

We shall undertake to open this doctrine by speaking to the following enquiries.

I. What a child of God may have his eye to,

when defiring to fee God's glory.

II. Where they would fee that glory.

III. Why they defire this.

IV. That for seeing this, they are to apply by prayer to him, and to say with Moses here, I beseech thee shew me thy glory: which will bring us to the use.

I. What a child of God may have his eye to,

when defiring to fee God's glory.

way of grace, in and thro' his Son. Any other discovery of God would be dreadful and terrifying, and instead of desiring it, he would deprecate

deprecate it. God out of Christ is a consuming fire, and as looking on him as thus considered, sinners would be overwhelmed with fear. We can have no fight of God any farther than he is pleased to manifest himself; nor any fight of him to our comfort, but thro' his Son, in whom he is reconciling sinners to himself, not imput-

ing their trespasses unto them.

God is faid to dwell in that light which no man can approach unto, 1 Tim. vi. 16. No man bath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, and hath done this in the most amiable endearing manner. And God's glory as displayed after fome manner in this way of grace, is that which is here spoken of. This God knew to be included in his fervant's meaning, when he requested, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory; and therefore answered, I will cause all my goodness to pass before thee. God's goodness is his Glory: this makes up the greatest part of bis Name, which he himself proclaimed, as passing by before Moses, chap. xxxiv. 9. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. And all God's goodness is no where summed up, but in Jesus Christ; nor in any eminent way displayed with reference to us, but thro' him, the only Mediator between God and men. Thro' him God delighteth in mercy, and in the manifestations of it in his dealing with finners, in order to their recovery. This is his Glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ; without whom, none of our apostate race could have seen the Glory of God

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God to their comfort, or have been fafe. It is in his wounds, that we are fecured from confuming wrath. Thro' him it is that the Glory of God shines, not with a destroying, but with a reviving light: and only as standing within this rock, we are enabled with comfort to behold it.

2. By the Glory of God the Saint defires to fee, is moreover meant God's special manifestations of himself, as reconciled to the soul, and giving it that inward peace and joy which a

stranger intermeddleth not withal.

To fee God in Christ reconciling the world to bimself, and thro's this Mediator dealing with finners in a way of Grace, in order to their recovery, This is glorious; but to fee him in Christ smiling upon me, and to hear him fay to me, I am thy God, thy Father, thy exceeding great reward, How glorious is this! To have him appear unto me, and fay, Contemplate my Perfections, my Wisdom, Power, Faithfulness and Love, and to hear him fay, Know that thou haft an interest in all these, how glorious is it! Think of the ranfom I have found, the defign I have been carrying on for the faving of finners, of my appointing my Son to be the captain of their falvation, by making him perfect through fuffering, in order to it, &c. and Know, that all this is for thee: view the covenant of grace established in his blood, and the exceeding great and precious promifes it contains: think from what evil I have there engaged to fecure all mine, what bleffings I have affured them, that I will bestow, and then, what

what relation I stand in to them; and row,

thou hast a title to all these favours.

I am God, a God in Christ, in covenant, and thine, and will deal with thee as such. All my ways shall be mercy and truth towards thee. My loving-kindness will I never take from thee. I will pardon thy sins, subdue thy corruptions, deliver thee from Satan, give thee Grace here, and Glory at last: I'll withhold nothing that is good for thee: I will affist thee in thy work, support thee under thy burdens, never, never never leave thee whilst in this world, and after all, take thee to be happy with myself for ever, &c.

To have God speak thus, and clothe his words with power and efficacy, making the soul to feel the sweetness of them, This is exhibiting his Glory indeed, and making his servants to see it, which is the great thing here desired.

This is called the fecret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him; the lifting up the light of his countenance upon them, the shining into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. This is God's unveiling his face, and at the same time an opening our understandings to behold him. So much for the first thing, what is the Glory of God a Saint desires to see, viz. 1. His Glory, as dealing with sinners in and through his Son: And, 2. The special manifestations of himself, as reconciled to their souls, and giving them peace and joy, which a stranger intermeddleth not with.

VOL. I.

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II. Where

II. Where would a faint fee the Glory of God, or have it shewn to him? why, in ordinances here and above and without ordinances, in heaven.

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1. In many ordinances here. Where God records his name, he declares to his people, he will come unto them, and will bless them, Exod. xx. 24. And thither the faint goes with earnest defire of meeting with him, expecting the clearest and most comfortable views of him, and the most large and lively communications from him. These we find the Psalmist had his eye to, and his heart with the greatest vehemence carried out after. Pfal. xlii. 1, 2. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My foul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? i. e. in the affemblies of his people, in attending upon his publick worship, as he elsewhere explains it. Pfal. xxvii. 4. One thing have I defired of the Lord, and that will I feek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. And again, Pfal. lxiii. 1, 2. O God, thou art my God, early will I feek thee: my foul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, fo as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

God is faid to be feen when his perfections are so. And how much of the Glory of these is shewn to believers, which they are made to see in his fanctuary, and in all the ordinances and institutions of it? particularly, in prayer

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and praise: in which by the influences of his Power and Grace, their hearts are warmed and enlarged, and made to ascend to him, and he descends to them in fresh supplies of strength, and life, and comfort. In his word read, and preached, opened and applied, what impressions are made? what effects produced? how easily and effectually sometimes are doubts resolved, objections answered, and light, and strength, and comfort conveyed? How much of God's Glory has been displayed in this?

But the Glory of God in his perfections, eminently shines forth in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; therein, in a peculiar manner, he has made his people to see it. There Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified before our eyes: the eternal Son of God is set forth as suffering, bleeding, and dying in our room and stead; to make atomement for sin, redeem us from hell and the wrath to come, and purchase all the blessings of the covenant of Grace, which

in this ordinance are fealed to us.

Much of God's Glory is here to be feen.

(1.) The Glory of his Wisdom in contriving a way how heaven and earth might be reconciled, notwithstanding the wide breach made by sin; and how the seeming contrary pleas of God's attributes might be adjusted, and mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other: how sin may be punished, and the sinner escape: how the law may be magnified and made honourable; and yet the guilty rebel not be dealt with according to his desert. No finite understanding could have

discovered how this could have been done. Angels and men would have been at an everlasting nonplus: and had they sate in counsel, this is the conclusion they might have come to, The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.

But when none else could, God himself found a ransom, appointing his own Son in our nature, by dying to become our Saviour, Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. And as made to see this (in commemorating Christ's death) believers have been made to cry out, O the depth of the riches

both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

(2.) How glorious is the discovery here made of God's holiness and justice, in the satisfaction made for fin, by the voluntary death even of God's own beloved Son, to make way for finners being pardoned and faved? Without blood there is no remission; and as nothing but the blood of the Son of God could procure this, the blood of him, as clothed with our nature, was shed. Never was there so bright a representation given of the justice of God, as was in this instance. All we like sheep had gone astray, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions: he was bruised for our iniquities. And considering who he was, and what he bare, and bow he was treated that we might be spared: the very ruin of the offending angels, the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, and the punishment which in hell lost sinners must suffer for ever, do not altogether shew forth the justice and

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and holiness of God, like the sufferings and death of Christ, born to redeem those that are saved of lost mankind.

(3.) Here divine Grace is to be seen in its brightest lustre: In its freeness, pitying us without merit or motive, and against the highest provocation: In its condescension, pitching upon us, and resolving to save us, how unworthy so ever: In its sovereignty, passing by angels, and providing a Saviour for men: In its riches, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that who sever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. O the love God commendeth to us, and displays before us, in giving his Son to die for us!

(4.) Here is displayed the Glory of God's faithfulness to his promises, and willingness to promote his peoples comfort; choosing in a sensible way to renew his covenant with them, and put them out of doubt, that all the blessings of it are theirs. Thus God is willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. And to his word and oath, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, God has added his seal, that they may have strong consolation, who have sled for refuge to the hope set before them.

Thus the Glory of God is shewn and reprefented to us in the Lord's Supper, as often as we come to remember Christ's death in that or-

dinance.

2. A Saint defires to fee the Glory of God in the state above, and without need of these prefent ordinances, even in heaven.

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Whatever displays of God's Glory are here offered to our view, there is anconceivably more to be feen above, tho' yet undifcover'd; fomething within the veil more bright, and which will make us more bleffed, than any thing we have feen yet. Here the utmost allow'd us, is to fee God's back parts; which how defireable foever, come short of seeing him face to face. The Glory of the Lord fometimes fills his house, and his ordinances here below, which believers are admitted to fee, to their comfort and joy: but this is only preparatory to the inconceivably greater displays, that will be made in heaven; which they are allow'd to expect, and after which their desires run.

But this brings me to the

III Thing, viz. Why a gracious foul defires God would shew bim his Glory: and this while in ordinances here, and at last in heaven?

In ordinances here, they defire this.

i. Because the Glory of God is transforming. The more we see of God in the manner described, the more we shall be like him; which is both our honour and happiness. 2 Cor. iii. 18. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Majes, by God's manifesting himself to him,

had his face made to thine: Some rays, as it were, were left upon him. And the disciples, when rais'd fo much above themselves, were taken notice of after it, to have been with Jesus, Acts iv. 13. Loon duorbly bas

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2. The Glory of God thus shewn to his people, is most reviving. It is not in the power of any thing in the world to give them that comfort, which God's manifesting of himself to them can do. After the Psalmist had succeeded in his request for the light of God's countenance, he adds, Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increas'd, Psal. iv. 7. And as to heaven, the people of God desire, he would there shew them his Glory, and eminently:

(1.) Because it will be most clear and full. The manifestations God will make of himself above, if here let out, would dissolve our present frame. None can see his face, and live: but this implies there is something in it, the receiving of which will make it worth their while to die. God's loving-kindness here, is better than life: What will it be then, as set forth in heaven?

(2.) The Glory to be revealed above, will be most satisfying. The spring of that fulness of joy which is in God's presence, and of those rivers of pleasures that flow at his right-hand for ever, will be so. This the Pfalmist speaks of, as the great thing he was most taken up with: As for me, 1 will behold thy face in righteougness: I shall be fatisfy'd, when I awake with thy likeness, Psal. xvii. 15. How much soever he valu'd and priz'd the present discoveries God was pleased to vouchfafe in his fanctuary, he receiv'd them but as earnests and pledges of something higher to succeed. He was fensible of the weakness and narrowness of his capacity in his earthly state, which was but his state of probation, in which no more was to be L4

be expected, than was suitable to it: And therefore he stretches his views farther, and speaks as peculiarly touch'd with that which was to sollow it. As for me, I would behold thy face; i. e. I desire I may do so, as that wherein alone I can,

and shall be satisfy'd.

There is another, and a better state of life, to which he reckon'd this, as it were asleep, to to that of beholding the face of God; compar'd to which, all that he had yet reach'd, could be only said to be a glimpse, and this of his backparts only. A view that would be perfectly satisfying, he longed for; but this was reserv'd 'till he awak'd, namely, into the world of light and vision, out of this dark imperfect state.

'Tis the same Glory of the Lord, which the Saints see here, and in heaven. But O! in how different a manner? Here through a glass darkly;

there with open face.

(3.) The manifestation there made, will be permanent and everlasting. Not a transient display and view, as here; but such as shall be always granted. The Glory of God will be eternally open, and they shall eternally behold it; and this with the highest delight, without interruption and without end.

These are some of the grounds of the Saints defire, that God would shew them his Glory, both

in ordinances, and above 'em.

IV. This defire they are to offer up in prayer to God. Defire is the Life of prayer, and this is to be made known by way of request to God. I befeech thee, shew me thy Glory.

I. To

1. To testify our value for it. They that esteem it as a favour to see God's Glory, are to shew this,

by seeking after it.

2. 'Tis God only that can shew us his Glory, and make us to see it; that can fit us for the favour, and then vouchsafe it to us. 'Tis he that must remove the veil, the face of the covering from off his people, and reveal himself to them; as he at first caused the light to shine out of darkness, by shining into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his Glory in the face of Jesus Christ. 'Tis an act of Power and Grace, and as such, to be pray'd for. And this leads us up to the use we ought to make of what has been said.

The APPLICATION.

1. Is it the temper of fuch as God has made partakers of his Grace, to defire and pray that he would shew them his Glory? And would they fee him in ordinances now, and in heaven at last? Let this put you upon looking into yourselves how it bas been, and how, as to this, it now is with you. Is it your hearts defire and prayer, that God would manifest himself to you, and make you to fee him? Are you longing and indeavouring to know him more? and longing for this, that you may love him more, ferve him better, have a higher delight in him, and become more meet for the state of perfect vision and fruition that you are also breathing after? or, on the other hand, are you strangers to any fuch defires and requests? Is the Glory of God veiled from you, his Glory in the face of Jesus Christ? and are you easy and content it should

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be fo? Have you no value for his presence; and the light of his countenance; the sense of his favour, and the gracious and comfortable influence of his Spirit? Have you no experience of any discoveries he makes of himself in his ordinances, nor of his distance and withdrawment from 'em, nor concern of heart about either? In attending holy duties, and the institutions of his house, is it all one to you, whether he be present or absent; whether he shew you his Glory, or leave you under a veil? Put such enquiries to your conscience, and urge it to be faithful; and according to the answer it gives, you may get some discovery of the state of your case, whether you are of the number of fuch as are got into a faving acquaintance with God (all which are defirous to know and enjoy more of him, and enlarge their defires as far as heaven) or fuch as are yet utter strangers to him, and as living and dying in that state, must remain in it for ever. For how can those expect to behold God's Glory in the next world, who have no defires of it in this, but think themselves well enough without it? And confidering the number, to which fo fad a character, the reverse to that in the text, too visibly belongs, I might,

2. In the second place, take up a lamentation over those souls, who though they have more to do with God than with all the world, yet think it no part of their concern to be acquainted with him, but securely live without him; and so are in danger of being separated from him, and falling under his wrath for ever. They that will not value and seek God's sayour and love, nor care

care for the glory of his grace, are liable to be

made the instances of his justice.

Little do finners know what they do, when they contemn God, faying to the Almighty, depart from us, we define not the knowledge of thy ways; though through his Son, his ways are ways of mercy: for as for such as will have none of God, he will have nothing in a way of grace to do with them, but in the most terrible manner come forth against them.

3. Is the Glory of God to be seen in ordinances here, and in heaven at last? This may serve for exhortation to those who have not seen the Glory of God, as his people have seen it in the sanctuary.

Is this Glory wont to be revealed and displayed in ordinances? make this your end in attending

upon them, to fee it.

(1.) In attending upon ordinances, propose to yourselves an end. If God and conscience ask you, what went you out for to see? Let your answer be ready, and such as you may not be ashamed of, but be able to stand to. We have need to be concerned all of us, because God is observant. He observes with what designs we come, what ends we propose; and therefore it concerns us to be careful as to this ourselves. Though our ends be hid from our fellow creatures, they are open to God. By these he judges of the heart, and so should we.

(2.) Let this be your end in attending upon ordinances, that you may meet with God in them, and behold his Glory. Such a fight has been vouchfafed, and may be attained: Make this your aim, that you may know what it means.

You

You have long, perhaps for many years, been attending upon one ordinance and another; let every one now ask his foul seriously, do I know what it is to have God manifesting his Glory in them? Have I at all been defirous of it? if not. what have I been doing but folemnly trifling in things not to be trifled with? what neglect, may many a one fay, have I been guilty of towards God, in that when he has waited to exhibit his Glory, I have had no mind to fee it? What wrong has this been to my own foul? Whilst others have been beholding the Glory of God, and have been changed into the same image, from Glory to Glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, fo as that many of them are near to heaven, all has continued dark about me, and dark within me; I am as unacquainted with God as ever, having made this no part of my scope.

Well, but howfoever it has been for the time past, let this now be thy design, in attending upon the ordinances and means of Grace, that thou may'st behold God's Glory. And in order

to it;

1. Get into a state of peace and reconciliation with God thro' Jesus Christ; such only as are so, are capable of beholding his Glory. 'Tis on this rock we are to stand, in the cliss of it we are to be hid, while God passes before us and manifests himself to us.

2. Desire and pray for some sight of this Glory. Beg the divine Spirit to kindle such desires, and then breathe them forth in prayer.

And do this,

(1.) With

(1.) With deep bumility, in a fense of your own unworthiness, and the greatness of the favour you ask.

(2.) With earnestness suitable to the value of the privilege; and as looking to Christ's merit, as the ground for hope of every thing that is good.

(3.) Beware of wilful fin, or carrying with you any iniquity allowed, even within, if you would fucceed in such a suit as this. Sin allowed will cause God to hide his face, or to meet you with a frown,

Lastly, Follow your prayers with suitable endeavours. Having said to God, I beseech thee shew me thy Glory, add with David, this will I seek after. Make conscience of being found where such desires as you have sent up, are wont to be answered. They mean nothing but to mock God, who can put up such a petition as this, I beseech thee shew me thy Glory, and then turn their backs upon him in his house, and make no conscience of attending where he is wont to be found.

One word to fuch as in answer to prayer have been made to see God's Glory in his ordinances, and I shall conclude this discourse. And that I may not miss the persons to whom this belongs, this enquiry here naturally comes in, how shall I know whether God has manifested himself to me, or made me see his Glory, yea or no? To answer in a few things.

1. They to whom God manifests his Glory, are thereby made more humble. It was when Job could say mine eyes have seen thee, that he

adds, wherefore I abbor myself, and repent in dust

and ashes: Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. A sweet relish will be left of God's gracious dealings with us, which we shall be pleased with, and be thankful that we once experienced it, even when the bright season is over. The King bath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine, Cant. i. 4. You may believe Moses never forgot the favour and honour done him, when God made his goodness to pass before him: He doubtless often sent back his thoughts to it, with fresh pleasure to himself, and thankfulness to God.

3. A greater love to Jesus Christ, is another fruit and sign of this. It was in his name implicitly, that this prayer of Moses went up to God the Father, I beseech thee shew me thy Ghry; for his sake it was heard and accepted; and through him, all the savourable manifestations that have been made to this day in answer to it,

have been obtained.

Bleffed be God, will the Saint fay, that has dealt fo graciously with me. O my foul! according to my value for this mercy, let thy love rise towards him, to whom I am indebted for it: confidering 'tis a favour which his blood was

fhed to procure.

4. They to whom God has flewn his Glory, will be filled with a greater fear of fin; that they may do nothing unworthy of the favour they have received, and that they may not put a bar in the way of the like for the future. None have fo great a dread and hatred of fin, as they

that have been brought nearest to him, and known most of his mercy and grace, in pardoning and accepting sinners, and them themselves, thro' Jesus Christ. Upon the offer of a temptation, this makes their hearts to rise, and furnish them with the answer, bow can I do this great wickedness and sin against God, whose goodness I have tasted, and whose Glory I have

feen with fo much comfort and joy?

Lastly, This, where vouchsafed, leads to stronger desires after heaven, where the vision shall be perfected, here on earth so happily begun, and where alone it can be compleated. Here the bright season, it may be, is short, and the light, how ravishing soever, hath much darkness mixed with it: but there, the discovery will be most clear, the vision and joy full, and all everlasting. And hence, from what is bere experienced, the Saint will have his soul raised and carried out to what is yet suture: and together with what God shall see sit to grant by the way, keep his eye ultimately on heaven, the end where his prayer shall receive its full answer, with which he shall rest satisfied for ever.

And if your experience of fuch things as thefe

speak you of this fort,

1. Think and speak with holy admiration of God's condescension and grace in his dealing so with you, that you should be singled out and thus favoured, and resolve it into his mere good pleasure. Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self to us, and not unto the world? John xiv. 22. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight, Luke x. 21.

2. Let this bespeak your chearful attendance, as often as opportunity offers, where God has unfolded his Glory to you. They who are deprived of such advantages by his afflictive providences, may hope he will make up the want by his presence at home; as every place is equally near to heaven: But they can't expect this, who will be wilful strangers where he has made it their duty to wait for him, and against the encouragements they have had, that this is not in vain.

3. Remember the years, the seasons of the right hand of the Most High; and after you have thus known God to your comfort, do not despair of your interest in him, tho' you should be left at some times to walk in the dark. If his Glory is veiled now, remember it was open; and the sun is where it was, and as full of light in itself, as it was, and may, ere long, shine out as bright as ever to you, tho' it be at present under a cloud.

The love of God to his people is unchangeable, though the discoveries of it to them, may not be always the same. If he now holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, so that you cannot see through, look back to the cliff of the rock in which he put you; and caused all his goodness to pass before you; and thence argue down your unbelieving doubts and fears. Say, surely, if it had pleased God to destroy me, he would not have shewn me such things as these, Judg. xiii. 23. God may have just reasons for hiding his face; but having loved his own, he loveth them unto the end. And such

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as he has manifested that love to, and brought within view of heaven, he will not utterly cast off, or make the monuments of unmixed wrath. Let every one of his people that were once listed up but now cast down, read his own words with application to themselves, Isa. liv. 7, 8, 9, 10. For a small moment bave I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer: For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

4. Be not ashamed on proper occasions, to signify what God has done for you; that you may thereby quicken and encourage others to wait for him in the same way. Let such as know no other pleasures than those of sin, be told, that there are far higher of another kind found in communion with God, which his people, even here, are sometimes admitted to; and that

religion is more than a name, and the joys of it such as exceed all other in the world: And tho what you have found can be no proof to another, it may be improved as an argument with such as are yet strangers to God, to seek after and make trial of these pleasures. O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man

that trusteth in him, Pfal. xxxiv. 8.

5. Whilst you have the comfort of God's manifesting himself to you, acknowledge it to his praise. Lift him up in your own souls, and lavor. I.

bour to bring others to better thoughts of him, by what he has done for you. Say, O Lord, thou art my God, and I will bless thee, my father's God and I will exalt thee. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still

praising thee. Selah, Psalm lxxxiv. 4.

Lastly, Continue to pray for clearer manifestations of God's glorious grace; and what is bere denied, believe shall be reached, and securely enjoyed above. Think of heaven as a place of beholding God's Glory, and one designed for your perfect blessedness; and as being so, setch your consolations from it, and with new vigour press on towards it. Begin the work of heaven in praising God, from what foretastes you have to sweeten your passing state towards it; and take God's shewing himself to you now, as an argument to your faith that he will take you at last to dwell with him for ever.

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SERMONX.

JOB XXVII. 8.

For what is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his Joul:

THESE are words of holy Joh, uttered while justifying himself against the uncharitable censure past upon him by his friends; the main drift of whose discourse was to prove, that he, and every one besides him so greatly afflicted as he was, must be, if not openly profane, at the best but a secret Hypocrite.

He solemnly asserts his sincerity, and resolves, while he lives, to defend it, and never yield to their charge, ver. 5, 6. God forbid that I should justify you; i. e. by condemning myself; till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; that is, neither the thing, nor the conscience and comfort of it: My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

So far was he from indulging or flattering himself in any evil way, that he trembled at M 2 the

the thoughts of the state and end of any that did fo; and would not let go his integrity, or be in the case of such, for all the advantage of any kind, one of this character might propose to himself in it: For what is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he bath gained, when God taketh away his foul? In the words we have,

1. The person spoken of, the Hypocrite, or the wicked man under a difguise, having on a

form of godliness only.

2. What is supposed concerning him, namely, that he hath his hope and gain, which he retains to the death; from whence he may think him-

felf happy, or be thought fo by others.

3. The real wretchedness of his case; as nothing he hath gained can fave him from death, or stand sim in stead when a dying. Nor will his hope accompany him beyond it: his death is certain, and it will be a peculiarly dreadful time with him, when God taketh away his foul.

All may be fummed up in this plain propos-

The Hypocrite's hope, how happy soever he may feem from it for a while, will leave him miferable when God shall take away his foul. In all the

In speaking to this, our work will be to

ods'

I. To whom the character of an Hypocrite belongs.

II. That fuch may have a hope, which they maintain as long as they live.

III. What they may be faid for a while to gain. is belianen of tall you live you in Helal.

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IV. The vanity and emptiness of the Hypocrite's hope and gain, and the certainty and dreadfulness of his misery, when God taketh away his soul.

V. The use of the whole.

I. Let us inquire to whom the character of an

Hypocrite belongs.

The word in the Greek (Troupiths) is commonly supposed to allude to one that acts at a play, representing another person than his own: As one of the meanest birth or fortune often personates a nobleman, or prince, and goes under that character, till the part he is to act is over. Hence transferred to religion, it is used in scripture to denote such as have put on a form of godliness, and would pass for saints, but are not in reality what they seem. They pretend to what

they are not, and conceal what they are.

The Hebrew word comes from one that fignifies a Cloud, as their wickedness is covered: or as they are painted over with another colour, hiding their natural one, that it may not be known. Thus an Hypocrite is a real enemy to God, outwardly acting as one of his children. He seems to hate sin, and fight against it. when he is really in love with it, and will not let it go. He appears zealous and earnest in the external duties of religion, as if working out his falvation, when all the while, he is mocking God, increasing his guilt, and fitting himself for greater destruction. In short, what they outwardly appear to be, and feem to do in religion, is only pretence and shew: as we read of some that faid, they were Jews, but were not, but did lie, M 3

Rev. iii. 9. fo Hypocrites say, they are christians, believers, the followers of Christ, when they are nothing at all of such. It is only a difguise they have put on; thro' which the searcher of hearts discovers them, and will disown them, and bid them depart at last, as workers of iniquity.

Let us open the character of an Hypocrite in

a few particulars.

1. An Hypocrite is one that pretends to have entirely devoted himself to God, when he has not, but divided his heart between God and the world; and fo God has no interest in him at all. 'Tis the whole heart God calls for, and he will accept of nothing less. Prov. xxiii. 26. My fon, give me thine heart. This every child of God has done: but the Hypocrite hath a double heart, Pfalm xii. 2. An heart, and an heart; one for God, and another for felf and the prefent world; one in his tongue that professes to be given up to God, and another in his breaft, the bent of which stands another way. He hath fomething else that he chiefly loves, and cleaves to; and therefore his refignation to God is with guile and referve, and only fo far as the flesh, and the world, his honour, gain or pleafure will give leave to it, and no farther. Whatever he pretends as to his being all for God, 'tis but pretence; there was deceit in his covenant transactions with him: and indeed, here all undoing hypocrify begins.

2. An Hypocrite is one that professes a regard to the will of God, as the reason, and to the glory of God as the end of what he does in re-

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ligion, when in the mean time, he acts from other fprings, and for lower and felfish end. An Israelite indeed is one in whom there is no guile: he is entirely given up to God, and acts with a steady regard to him, according to the rule, 1 Cor. x. 13. What soever ye do, do all to the glory of God. This the true christian aims at, and is govern'd by. As he had no guileful referves in devoting himself to God; so he has no guileful purposes in acting before him; but labours above all things to approve himself to God, and be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 9. This is the character of a truly gracious foul. On the contrary, an Hypocrite does what he does, from custom or company, or to gain reputation or applause, or to promote his interest among men. Whilst zeal for God is pretended, self is at the bottom; and all is done, as by the Pharifees, to be seen of men.

3. An Hypocrite is one that takes more pains to appear outwardly religious, than to be really so, so between God and his own soul. A true christian is as solicitous about his heart as his life, knowing that both are under the eye of God, and that he searcheth the heart, as well as observes the ways, and requireth truth in the inward parts: he therefore labours that the temper of his heart may be found answerable to his profession, and would be really that in the sight of God, which he seems to be to his fellow

creatures.

But this is not the Hypocrite's concern. If he has a fair outfide, he is little careful how matters stand within. Upon this account Christ M 4 brands

brands the Scribes and Pharifees with the title of Hypocrites, and pronounces a woe upon them. For ye, faith he, are like unto whited sepulchres. which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens bones, and all uncleanness; even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrify and iniquity, Mat. xxiii. 27, 28. A true christian knows, he has more to do with God than with all the world, and would fain be throughout like him, and pleafing to him, in heart and life. The real, tho' invisible, purity of the one, as well as the apparent holiness of the other, is what he looks to, and labours to promote: and therefore makes conscience of secret sins and duties, fuch as the world cannot be witness to, and is as careful to avoid the one, and perform the other, from a regard to the eye of God, as if all the world were looking on. In what he does before others, his chief regard is to God; and the fame regard has the fame influence upon him, when retired, and as to what lies out of fight, and will not allow him to be negligent about his heart and inward man, any more than about his conversation. With him, 'tis a small thing to be judged of man in his day; knowing that he that judgeth him, is the Lord. And how awful are the words, I the Lord fearch the beart: which part therefore, a true Christian bestows most of his time and pains about.

An Hypocrite is most outside, and has a splendid profession, by which to recommend himself to men: and if so that their esteem is secured, he rests satisfied. What more immediately re-

lates

lates to God and the foul, he neglects. This is call'd a mocking of God, and argues a great deal of unbelief; for what man could be so mad as to put on a mask, and personate the outward garb of a Saint, without endeavouring after the inward temper and frame of such, if he did believe what God has reveal'd in his word, as to his being and persections, and as to a day of judgment; wherein what is now hid shall be made manisest, and every one shall receive ac-

cording to his works?

4. An Hypocrite is one that, in religious duties, puts God off with bodily fervice, whilft the heart is unengaged and left out. Of this God complains, Ifa. xxix. 13. This people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. Such the Father feeketh to worship him, and such only will he accept. Thus the true Christian does worship him, Philip. iii. 3. We are the circumcifion, which worship God in the Spirit. What fuch a one does, he does for God, and endeavours to do it heartily, as to him: not feignedly, but in truth: not faintly, but with fervour; labouring to have all his outward expressions flow from inward suitable affections.

If he prays, he would pour out his heart; if he gives thanks, he calls upon his foul, and all that is within him to bless the name of the Lord; in hearing he sets his heart to all the words which the Lord shall testify to him.

Thus

Thus what he does in religion, he does in earnest, knowing that in the whole of it, he has
to do with God, and that 'tis not a vain thing,
but for his life. But an Hypocrite's heart is lest
behind, when he pretends to draw nigh to God.
He is cold and lifeless in the midst of his most
strain'd and affected fervency: he seeks not approbation with God, but commendation from
men; and therefore 'tis all but bodily service
without an heart.

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5. and lastly, An Hypocrite is partial and uneven in his obedience to God, and his walk with him. He picks and chuses among his commands; is strict in the observance of some, and negligent of others; is now seemingly zealous, and a little while bence, grows weary and remiss.

A child of God has the Law of God written in his heart, and approves and endeavours to conform to all its parts. There is no duty that he objects to; no fin fecret or open that he can allow himself in: he would fain be what God would have him be, and this at all times, and in all places; saying as David, Psalm cxix. 128. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

But the Hypocrite, while he seems to make conscience of some duties, do but follow him round, or for any considerable time, and he will be found to be negligent, or unconstant as to others. He has no delight in any, and performs them all as a task or burden; and therefore, when he can with safety to his reputation, will consult his ease by their omission. Will the

the Hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? verse 10. Will he be uniform or universal in his walk with him? 'tis implied, he will not, Job. xxvii. 10.

In such instances as these, we have seen, who the Hypocrite is, or to whom the character be-

longs.

II. Such may have an Hope, which they may maintain or keep up to the death, or till their entering upon their eternal state. This is evident from the pleas they are brought in as making before the judge; they being those which they went from hence full of, and built much upon to their latest breath. Mat. vii. 23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophefied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? i.e. And upon these they had raised great expectations, till Christ comes to declare unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. Not that there will be any room for fuch a plea before the judge at the last day: but matters are represented as they stand with finners at their death. These are the thoughts and hopes which they feem to retain to the last, and which they go away from hence withal, and as refolving to plead. The hope of thy Hypocrite, as to some of 'em, perishes sooner; but in others it is continued, till God takes away their jouls. Their hope, how groundless foever, fometimes accompanies them to the death, and lives as long as they. 'Tis strange, that in fouls fo unsafe, it should so long be kept up: but 'tis owing in many to fuch things as these.

I. To wretched ignorance of themselves. thro' neglecting to look into their own hearts, or to taking up the report they make, upon a very fuperficial fearch; as if they had never read, that the heart is deceitful above all things. And he that ventures without strict examination, to trust it, especially in a matter of everlasting consequence, is guilty of the greatest folly. As a deep sense of the deceitfulness of the heart, keeps the humble christian full of jealousy and fears, least he should be mistaken in his state, and finally miscarry: so ignorance of this, is the strange ground of the Hypocrite's hope. But how much better is the state of the one than the other? as it is more defireable to go trembling to heaven, than confident and rejoicing to hell.

2. Another cause of this is, their not attending to the extent and spirituality of the law, as to what it requires of them, and how far they come short of obedience to it. To this the Apostle Paul's hope was owing, whilst a Pharise; for he owns, I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, Rom. vii. 9.

3. The favourable apprehensions others may have of them, especially if those are serious christians, greatly nourish the Hypocrite's hope. There are some that have a name to live, and are dead: and with, and in that name alone, self-

love leads them eafily to rest.

4. Comparing themselves with open sinners, or more loose professors, they conclude themselves safe; and with the Pharisee, may thank God

God that they are not in their state, or not like others that are of the vileft of men that fin with-

out measure, and without all guard.

5. Lastly, The length they may go as to the attainment of what looks like grace. His abstaining from many fins, and his practifing of feveral religious duties, greatly contribute to strengthen the hope which the Hypocrite is here fupposed to have: which leads to the

III. Thing, viz. what the Hypocrite for a

while may gain.

'Tis supposed that some advantage they aim

at, and may also reach.

1. By the part they act, they may gain more of the world. This, it may be, they aim'd at, and made religion subservient to. Thus the Pharifees made long prayers, and thereby devoured widows houses: their specious profession promoted their temporal interest. The Hypocrites

gain the world, or often hope to do fo.

2. They may gain the efteem and applause of men, and have the reputation of being eminently holy and religious, fo that many may think that none stand fairer for heaven than they do. This was what the Pharifees aim'd at, even in their addresses to God, to be seen of men: And verily, fays Christ, they have their reward. Mat. vi. 5.

3. They may gain a fort of peace in their own minds, fo as to conceit themselves rich, and increased with goods of a spiritual nature, when they are really wretched, and miserable, and poor,

and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17.

4. They

- 4. They may hereupon gain a smooth passage through the world, and an easy going out of it; may be secure while they live, and left by the judgment of God under the power of the strong delusion they have softered, till they are dead.
- 5. And lastly, They may have a pompous funeral, and be well spoken of when they are dead.

These are some of the things the Hypocrite may gain.

But after all,

IV. We are to confider the vanity of the Hypocrite's hope and gain, and the certainty and greatness of his misery, notwithstanding his seeming advantage. What is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul?

1. What is the hope of the Hypocrite? 'Tis spoken of with contempt: What is it? How

vain! how vanishing! how deceiving!

'Tis an Hope without ground.

An Hope without fruit.

An Hope that will not hold before his judge, but then leave him ashamed and miserable; and the more miserable from his foregoing dream of being happy.

2. What is the gain of the Hypocrite?

'Tis unsuitable to his soul, his better part:
'Tis bounded within this present life, and can accompany him no farther. It can't keep him from going hence; nor from being miserable, after he is gone and removed.

3. What

3. What is both the hope and gain of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his foul? Confider, who will take away; God, whose power there is no resisting, and from whose presence there is no escape: What, he will take away, the soul, that immortal undying part: How will he do this? with violence sometimes, but always in anger: from what? viz. from all his present hopes and gains: whither? to real misery, and to the greatest share of it; to all this he is continually liable, and at no time safe from it. While he is crying peace, peace, sudden destruction is coming upon him. What is the hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his soul?

The APPLICATION.

1. Seriously search whether you are among the number of those whom the characters of the Hypocrite will suit; or you are not. Do not conclude before trial that you are not, nor be content with a superficial search; a day of strict examination and discovery is coming. Try before-hand, that you may know your present state, and have time to get it altered through the grace of God, if you find it bad.

2. Dread nothing more than the Hypocrite's hope, and frequently look to the foundation of your own. Remember you are building for eternity, and the ground-work cannot be laid too firm

or fure.

3. Bless God if you are able to give a reason of the hope that is in you; but do it with trembling and fear, considering the final judgment is not yet over.

4. Do

A. Do

4. Do nothing to fink your hope, or fill you with overwhelming fear. Think often, what you hope for, whom you hope in, and of the ground you hope upon; and thus prepare for your removal, that when God comes to take away the foul, you may willing refign yours, and fo readily depart from your state of hope and expectation, to one of fruition.

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r. Seriously search whether has a secretary the number of those whom the search of the supporting will fair; or you are established the concentration before trial that you are search as the concentration and discourses a search. Try he fore hand, that you may secon your a elent fire, and have time to get it altered through the concentration and elect it altered through the general

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SERMON XI.

JOB XXVII. 8.

For what is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his foul.

The fecond Sermon on this Text.

THE awful doctrinal truth we have under confideration from these words, is

The Hypocrite's hope, how happy soever he may seem for a while from it, will leave him miserable when God taketh away his soul.

In speaking to this, we propose to shew,

I. Who the Hypocrite is.

II. That fuch may have a hope, which they maintain as long as they live.

III. What they may be faid for a while to gain.

IV. The certainty and greatness of the Hypocrite's misery, when God taketh away his foul.

I. As to the character of an Hypocrite: In general we told you, he is one that acts a part in religion, representing the person he is not, as a Vol. I.

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player on a stage, to which the word alludes. In

particular,

r. He is one that pretends to have entirely devoted and given up himself to God, when he has not, but divides his heart between God and the world; and so God has no interest in him at all.

2. He is one that professes a regard to the will of God, as the reason of what he does in religion, and to the glory of God, as his end; when, in the mean while, he is acted by other springs, and from lower and selfish designs.

3. He is one that takes more pains to appear outwardly religious, than to be really so, so be-

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tween God and his own foul.

4. In religious duties, he puts God off with bodily fervice, while the heart is unengaged and left out.

5. Lastly, Under a fair profession, he is partial and uneven in his obedience to God and walk

with him,

II. We have shewn that such may have a hope, which they may maintain to the death, or till entering upon their eternal state.

'Tis strange that in a foul so unsafe, it should so long be kept up; but 'tis owing in many to

fuch things as thefe,

neglect to look into their own hearts; taking the report they make without examining, or upon a very superficial search, as if they had never heard that the heart is deceitful above all things. And he that ventures to trust it, especially in matters

of eternal concern, without making strict examination into it, is guilty of the greatest folly.

2. Another cause of this, is their not attending to the extent and spirituality of the Law, as to what it requires of them, and how far they come short of obedience to it.

3. The favourable apprehensions others have of them, especially if those are serious Christians,

greatly nourishes the Hypocrite's hope.

4. Comparing themselves with open sinners, or more loose professors, they conclude themselves

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5. The length they may go in several things greatly contributes to strengthen the hope which the Hypocrite is here supposed to have. This, as being a common ground of delusion, it may be proper to consider it in some obvious instances. As

I. They may have what looks like Grace, the very graces of the Spirit; for the graces of the Spirit communicated to faints, and which accompany falvation, may be painted upon others than

they, and feemingly appear in them.

Those awful words are commonly understood of the unregenerate, and to shew how far they may go, Heb. vi. 4. Though they afterwards prove apostates, 'tis supposed they were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghos, i. e. of his common operations and impressions resembling special and saving ones; and, it may be, which long passed for such. For there is no grace belonging to a child of God, but may have a fair imitation in an Hypocrite.

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Particularly,

1. They may have great Knowledge. An Hypocrite may have a clear head, and well filled with spiritual truths, of which he may be able to discourse excellently, and be greatly admired, it may be, beyond many a gracious soul. And to how many has this proved a snare, by their nourishing an ungrounded hope from it, of their

being true children of light?

Their knowledge indeed comes short of that which is saving; as it is not truly experimental, nor thoroughly efficacious: but it is very like it, as it sometimes touches the affections: and hence they are said to taste the good word of God. And it may work to an external reformation in some degree: hence we read of some that may bave escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 20. And under such attainments, some may be led hastily to conclude, nothing is wanting to them of that which belongs to a real christian.

2. An Hypocrite may go far in what has a refemblance of Repentance. Conscience may be awakened and troubled for sin, and the man may take up many purposes to forsake it, and while thus purposing, he may feel some inward peace to encourage him to put them in practice; which notwithstanding he does not: yet these, though they leave the heart and life unchanged, are often taken for repentance and real conversion. The Hypocrite's sorrow for his sins is not upon account of their sinfulness; but as they are the causes of their suffering: not for the evil that is in them, but for that which they bring upon them,

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and expose them to, in this world and and the next. But yet, as such things as I have mentioned, have been experienced within them, this adds to the ground on which their hope is built, that matters are well with them.

3. As there is a Faith unfeigned in such as are saved; so there is something so like it, in others, that it is frequently taken for the same.

The stony ground hearers are faid to believe for

a while, Luke viii. 13.

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Their Faith indeed wants a root, but that is not discovered till a time of trial. They may affent to what is revealed in the word, as true; profess to accept of Christ or consent to him, and to rely upon him for life and falvation: But their affent is rather an opinion, than a full perfuafion; and their consent defective and partial, as to the act and object. A whole Christ, must be received with the whole heart, which formalifts come not up to. They are willing to have Christ as a Saviour, but not as a Lord; consent that he should deliver them from hell, not from fin. Their professed dependance upon him, is not accompanied with an entire refignation to him, and a willingness to let go all that stands in competition with him. They may profess this in general; but when it comes to particulars, fomething or other will be excepted against, and a stand made. But the difference as to these, is not presently attended to; they having a shew of faith, and seemingly exercifing its several acts, are reckoned by themfelves, and others, among true believers, and promile themselves the privileges of such.

4. Hypocrites may have the resemblance of Love to the people of God, and hence conclude

their state good.

This you know is made the mark of a faving change, I John iii. 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren. But love to faints, which is a mark of a child of God, is love to them as fuch, because of their holiness or likeness to God; and so he loves all fuch, and them most that are most holy, and God most of all. This cannot be said of any unfound professors. The love they have to the people of God, takes its rife from other things, the natural or acquired excellencies they observe in them, or the kindnesses they may have received from them. Not holiness, but something else is the chief ground of their affection, However, their being able to fay that they love them, it farther strengthens their considence as to the present goodness of their state, and so their hope for future happiness. raduled sees

5. Hypocrites may have a resemblance of de-

light and joy in spiritual things.

Thus it is said of the stony ground hearers, that they received the word with joy, Matt. xiii. 20. And we read of some whose hearts were far from being right in the sight of God, of whom 'tis said, they take delight in approaching to God, Isa, lviii. 2. Hypocrites indeed delight not in the word and ordinances, because of their spirituality, or as the means of enjoying communion with God, and communications from him; but in something lower and more external. In sitting under the word, the preacher may be

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to them as a very lovely song of one that bath a pleasant voice, Ezek. xxxii. 32. With whose delivery they are pleased, more than with the truth delivered. And this is their delight in somewhat which relates to the things of God, is taken for delight in himself, the property of his children; and hence they are willing to conclude themselves some of the number.

Thus far as to the length they may go in the

attainment of what looks like grace.

II. Their abstaining from sin may be another ground of their considence. Herein they may

make a fair shew, and go far.

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They may abitain not only from gross enormities, but from the open commission of fmaller fins, carrying it blamelefly and inoffenfively in the fight of all observers. What, to appearance, can a real Saint do more than a Pharifee, as to this, will do? There is indeed a great difference as to the springs and principles, with regard to which, the one and the other abstain from fin, and fet themselves against it. An Hypocrite abstains from fin, from regard chiefly to its confequences, shame in this world, and hell in another: A Saint, from hatred and abhorrence of the evil that there is in it, as contrary to the nature and will of God, and defiling as well as ruining to the foul. The former abstains from fin, out of a regard to man; the latter, from respect to the eye of God: The one from the restraints of providence, or of natural conscience; the other from a new principle within: The one through fear of his own fufferings; the other from respect to the sufferings of Christ, and love and N 4

and gratitude to him. But whatever be their different motives, as an Hypocrite, to appearance, may keep at the same distance from sin, as a real saint, so his resemblance in this to the children of God, helps to keep up his hope, that

he shall fare as well as such.

III. In the performance of duties, a formalift for what appears, may come nothing short of a real faint: and this not only, as to acts of morality, or what is commendable before men: but in acts of piety and devotion with respect to They may pray long, and often, and act honeftly; hear much, and with feeming affection; frequently attend the Table of the Lord, and fo eat and drink in his presence, and to appearance, walk fuitably to all this. Indeed, they do not what they do, from the same principles with ferious Christians, viz. from love and obedience to God, in a dependance upon the Spirit and Grace of the Redeemer, as defigning the advancement of God's Glory, and placing their happiness in his acceptance. What they do, begins and centers in felf, arises from carnal worldly motives and views. But, as their principles are hid, a fair outfide dazzles their fight; and as they outwardly look like faints, and it may be, of the highest form, from hence they think, they have ground for a raifed hope.

But the vanity of their hope and gain, and the certainty and greatness of their misery, we endeavoured to open in the foregoing discourse on this text. And now I would set myself to assist you in the *improvement* of the whole. And O that the Spirit of God may set in with us, that

a discourse of Hypocrify may be of use to engage us to look after fincerity in ourselves, and some evidence concerning it; that we may have the comfort of it, while we live, and the happiness

promised to such, when they die.

I. Will the Hypocrite's hope leave him so miserable when God shall take away his soul? In what danger are multitudes of professing Christians, and how deplorable is it, that it is no more considered and laid to heart? Are they indeed all Christians that bear the name? Are they all the servants of God, and the living Members of Christ, that would be so accounted? Is not the day a coming, that will discover the contrary? Many profess to be what they are not, which in general is the meaning of being an Hypocrite. And how many fall under this character?

1. They do so who call themselves Christians, and yet continue in a course of sin. To call themselves Christians, is to say that Christ is their Lord and Master, and they his servants; but how plainly do they discover their guile, who under a profession of Christianity, are common and customary workers of iniquity. Whatever relation they claim to Christ, they have no part or interest in him; and without a change are told before-hand, they will be discovered by him. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosever doth not righteousness, is not of God, I John iii. Io. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

I John ii. 4. Every one that claims a relation

to Christ, ought himself also so to walk, as Christ walked. And they that keep up the claim, and make no confcience of departing from iniquity. are blind indeed if they can't difeern their own hypocrify. How strange is it, that any such can flatter themselves with the hope of heaven, when they may so easily know, they are in the way that leads to destruction! And how is the guilt of fuch increased by every prayer they make; pretending to confess and bewail sin, and beg gracious affiftance against it, when they hold on in the practice of what they feem to pray against? Under a Sermon they fit before God as his people, and hear his words, but with no defign to do them. At the Table of the Lord, they eat and drink in Christ's presence, pretending to commemorate his dying love, and professing their love and subjection to him, and yet go away, and'life up their heels against him.

2. Those need not to be at a loss for their character, who have a form of godliness without the power of it; who make a strict profession, and are constant and punctual, and, it may be, seemingly zealous in the performance of external duties, such as prayer, hearing, and attending the Lord's Table; but never were concerned to have a work of grace wrought in their hearts, any principle of life within, to enliven the profession they have taken up. Now as the Apostle argues, Rom. ii. 28, 29. He is not a Jew, nor is he a Christian, which is one (only) outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is cutward (only) in the flesh; but he is a Jew.

few, and an Ifraelite indeed, which is one inwardly; and circumcifion is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of

men, but of God.

Religion is an *inward* thing: the principles from whence it fprings, the motives that carry it on, the manner of performance of what a faint does that is pleafing to God, and profitable to himself, are all inward things. But few comparatively, know any thing of this, or look after it. They go on in a round of duty, make a specious appearance, act something like saints,

and pass for such, and here they rest.

3. They belong to the number of Hypocrites, who take up a profession of religion to serve some secular design, making this their governing aim; they join themselves to the people of God, are seemingly zealous in his worship and service, not from love to him, but for by ends of their own. How many are conscious to themselves of this, and have sometimes the uneasy thought, that God sees thro' the disguise and will not be mocked, tho' they may deceive their sellow-creatures? but from a prospect of gaining their selfish purposes, a profession is maintained, and they go on acting a part in religion, which is what is meant by Hypocrisy.

4. They fall under the charge, who under a profession of godlines, retain or are under the power of any one sin how secret soever. The truth of grace may consist with the remains of sin; but can have no place where sin reigns or

has

has dominion. They that are Christ's, have crucified the sless, with the affections and lusts, Gal. v. 24. They are not willing, any should be spared. Where therefore, any iniquity is regarded in the heart, or practised with allowance in the life, 'tis a sad sign sincerity is want-

ing.

And now putting these together, how great is the number of Christians only in name, that are not really and indeed what they would be thought? And what heart should be unaffected at the danger they are in? What is the hope of the Hypocrite, under any disguise, when God taketh away his soul? An hope they are supposed to have, but O, how vain, how useless, how destructive will it prove? How dangerous does it make their security now, as God is shortly coming to take away the soul? And what misery is it betraying them to, and will lodge them in, if they are not speedily awakened?

What is the hope of the Hypocrites, tho' they are pleased with it, or seem to gain by it? With what pity should they be considered, who are secure upon the brink of the greatest misery? O the power that is ready to lay hold on them! O the value of the soul to be taken away! O the wrath that must be their everlasting portion! How unconcerned soever they may be for a while, the time is coming when the sinners in Zion shall be afraid, when fearfulness shall surprize the Hypocrites, making them cry out, who among us shall dwell with devouring sire,

who shall dwell with everlasting burning?

Ifa. xxxiii. 14.

II. Will the Hypocrite be so miserable when God shall take away his soul? let this engage us with the greatest concern to look into our hearts, and examine the state of our case. There is nothing we are more backward to, or more apt to be superficial in, than the trial of ourselves; and yet nothing is of greater moment and concern, especially in the present case. For,

1. 'Tis common for men to think themselves something, when they are nothing; to conceit they have grace, and it may be to bless God for it, and be pleased with their hope of heaven and glory, when it may be all of it delusive and groundless. The soolish virgins are instances of this. They took their lamps as well as the wise, and went forth with them to meet the bridegroom; thought themselves well provided to meet their Lord, and were not convinced of their mistake, till the midnight cry was made; and then they found all their work to do, but their time of preparation over.

Many have favourable thoughts of their case, from self-love, because they were never thorowly sensible of the vileness of their nature, and of the greatness and inwardness of the change necessary to be made in them by grace, and of the excellent temper it will produce; and as also being ignorant of the cheating content and comfort they may have from the external performance of duties, tho' they neglect looking into the frame of their hearts: If such a case be sad,

it concerns every one to bestir himself, that it

may not be his own. Moreover,

2. Some keep up a profession that have often misgiving thoughts that their hearts are not sound; but yet thro' negligence or sloth, hope the best, or adjourn the work of a thorow search, and so go on from day to day, fearing, and yet formal; upon the brink of ruin, and yet doing nothing to prevent it. If you have any sense of the danger of this case, presently set about the search.

This may be an encouragement to it, that your final state is not yet fixt; so that you need not shun it thro' overwhelming dread to look into your hearts to know the truth of your case. Be it what it will, how bad soever, there is yet hope. And if a blessed change be already made, the discovery of it as made, upon solid grounds, will yield you the greatest comfort. Resolve therefore upon the search. Do it speedily, for God is coming to judge, and your soul going, and you know not how soon: Do it carefully, 'tis a matter on which eternity depends: Do it thorowly, for what will it avail to be superficial, when the trial before the judge will be most severe and strict? Wherefore

III. Take up with no hope, but such as will stand you in stead, when God shall take away the soul. Remember he is about to do so. God taketh away the soul, this he is daily doing, and will go on to take away the souls of all the men and women in the world; the souls of real saints, and of nominal unsound professors. He taketh both away, tho' in a very different man-

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ner, and to very different states: the souls of the first in mercy; those of the other in wrath; those of the first with a gentle; those of the other with an angry hand. However, he taketh away both, and that to give an account to him, and to be disposed of by him, to all eternity. 'Tis hence plain, that it is a very awful thing for God to take away a soul, and to take it from this to an unseen everlasting world; and therefore no small matter will stand us in stead in such an hour. If you ask, what hope will not stand any one in stead, when God taketh away the soul? the answer is obvious from his own word.

1. Not the hope that is built upon a mere profession, how specious soever. Not every one that faith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the

kingdom of beaven.

2. Not a hope that is built upon excellent gifts and attainments. Tho' we have all knowledge, and could speak with the tongue of men and angels; if nothing more is added, it may increase our condemnation, but will not support

an hope of heaven.

3. Not an hope that is built upon external reformation, abstaining from gross sin, performance of external duties, or upon the common workings of the Spirit upon the soul: all these may be where the heart is unchanged, and the professor lost.

4. Not an hope that is built upon the good opinion of others; it being a small thing to be

judged of man, in his day of judging.

5. Not

5. Not an hope, that is built upon what we enjoy, or fuffer as to the present world: No man knoweth either love or hatred, by the di-

stribution of these lower things.

6. Not an hope that is built upon church privileges, fuch as being admitted into communion with faints, and partaking of the ordinances of the Gospel, by being baptized, hearing the word, and eating and drinking with Christ at his table. These are pleaded, and a mighty stress is laid upon them by many whom Christ will bid depart from bim, as workers of iniquity. It may be faid of an hope built upon any of these grounds, what is it, when God taketh away the foul? 'Tis an hope that will perish with those who go off the stage of this world without having any other. Instead of this, the hope you are to look after, is an hope that has the Spirit of God for its efficient, and a holy believing foul for its subject. It is God that causeth us to hope at first, and to abound in it afterwards, through the power of the Holy Ghoft.

It is an hope that has the mercy of God in Christ for its ground, and the promise of God for its warrant:

An hope that has fear for its companion, with which it is always mixt and balanced, as the great bleffing of the new covenant, by which God hath declared he will put his fear into the heart of his people, that they may not depart from him.

'Tis an hope that has holiness for it fruit, and heaven for its scope and end.

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This is the hope that will live when the Saint is dying. And if it be asked, what it will then do for him? the answer is obvious, it will then be the anchor of the soul, both sure and sted-sast, entering into that which is within the veil; and having accompanied him to the gate of glory, enter him safe into the state of vision and full enjoyment therein.

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SER,

SERMON XII.

JOB VII. 16.

I loath it, I would not live alway.

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HESE are the words of holy Job, in the bitterness of his soul expressing his desire to God, rather to be dismissed from this world and life in it, than stay longer in them. Now let us consider,

1. The character of the person speaking. He was one that seared God, Chap. i. one peculiar-

ly related and devoted to him.

2. What he speaks of, viz. The continuation of his present life upon earth, for any very long while.

3. The aversion he declares he had to desire this; his full aversion to it, and weariness, even to think of it: I loath it, I would not live alway: Now tho' these words of Job were spoken in distress, and might not be uttered by him without passion; yet they contain great reason in them, and set before every child of God such a rule of moderation to guide him in his love to continuance in this life and world, that he will say them after him: I loath it, I would not live alway. Now therefore I will shew,

I. Where a child of God would not live always.

II. Why.

III. What is implied in faying this. IV. In what manner he thus speaks.

V. To whom.

VI. The use of the whole.

I. Where a child of God would not live al-

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To this the answer is obvious; not on earth, but heaven: not here in a foreign country, among strangers and enemies, in the midst of dangers and snares, wants and trials; but in his Father's house, in a better place, with better company, in a better state and world: a world of perfect purity and peace, free from all the sin and sorrow that so much abound in this. And a saint would thus speak, not only in the worst, but in the best state he can here be in. He can say this, not only in a frowning, but in a smiling world, I would not live always: No, not on a Throne, as well as not on a Dunghil.

The utmost to be enjoyed or expected on this side heaven, can't make him wish, that it may be always with him as now, that this may be his everlasting abode. When it is best with him, he can't say, I have attained all that my heart is set upon: I am now as I would be, and never desire to change. No, no; in his account, the worst condition of a child of God, is preserable to the best of any that are strangers and enemies to him: And as to himself, when most savoured, upon earth, he would still speak it as his inward sense, heaven is inconceivably have

better.

This is one petition that hath frequently a place in his prayers, Lord deliver my foul from the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy bid treasure. And tho' at times the children of God may be peculiarly favoured, and have fo much of heaven let down to earth, as to put them upon crying out with Peter, when present at Christ's transfiguration, Lord, 'tis good for us to be here, and speak of making tabernacles, as looking no farther; this is done, as not knowing what they fay: for when they come to themfelves, they will fpeak at another rate, viz. Thus, it is good for me to draw near to God; the nearer the better, and when nearest of all, 'twill be best of all. And as this cannot be, till they come to heaven, they would still fay of this world, in opposition to that, I would not live always here.

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There be many that fay, who will shew us any good? that's the language of the men of the world: in opposition to which, the Saints defire and pray, Lord lift thou up the light of the countenance upon us. And tho' this puts gladness in their hearts, more than others experience in the time that their corn and their wine increase: yet what the highest of them enjoy in this kind, is far short of what the meanest of those have reached, that behold God's face above.

This therefore, is what every one of the houshold of faith is breathing after; such would not take up with any thing vouchsafed on the way, so as to forget what will be granted at the end. The Saint can speak it by way of appeal

to God, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I defire besides thee. Let others take up with what they will; as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness. His satisfaction is not compleat, nor can it be in a state of trial, in which he must be conceived to be, during his stay upon earth. And therefore as considering this, he speaks as in the text, I would not live always. A child of God would not always live in the present world or state.

Before I proceed, try yourselves by this, whether you are in the number of the children of God or not.

'Tis a question we are often asked, how shall I know whether I am one of the children of God? I now answer, you may know it by this among other things, a child of God would not always live in the present world. How is it with you? But on the other hand, a carnal unrenewed soul, could he have as much of earth as he desires, would, if he might, live always here. Now bring the matter to yourselves, and let conscience speak as under the eye of God.

1. You that are mean in the world, would

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I know the answer of such is ready, no; my circumstances are not so easy and agreeable, as to tempt me to this; well, but which do you most desire? a more easy prosperous condition upon earth, or something above and beyond it, not to be entered upon, till you go from hence? Which do you most ardently wish and long for,

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to be rich and great upon earth, or to be with God and Christ in heaven? 'Tis certain, the state we most desire, we at heart most love and prize; and there, if we could have our wish, we would always abide and live. Now, do your desires work more after what this world can yield or offer, than after what God reveals, and calls you to in another? Are you for treasures on earth, rather than treasures in heaven? When the first is said, 'tis a sign the heart is yet unchanged, and placed on this world by desire and

choice, as its utmost aim and scope.

When a man falls from his God, not being felf-fufficient, he is forced to have recourse to fomething without him, and fo to fet up the world in his Maker's room. How little foever any of our shares may be in it, if this be what with longing eyes we are looking after, counting them happy who abound in its wealth, and have all things at command, and defiring above all things to be in circumstances like theirs, we are in an earthly unfanctified state, and not yet come into the number of the children of God, not being able in truth to speak the language of fuch, viz. Let this world be represented to me how it will, should all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them be offered me in opposition to God and heaven, I would not for this live always.

2. You that have much of the world, and are in circumstances that others below you are tempted to envy, and covet to reach, would you live always in the present world, could its smiles always be secured to you? I don't expect

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to meet with any that will own this: but try by your inward pleasedness and delight. Is not this greater in present, seen, and sensible things, than in what the Gospel proposes to faith and hope? Is it with higher fatisfaction that you think and speak of what you possess below, than in what you are told God has prepared above? Must not conscience testify this, that such would here live always if they might? the world is that to them which God should be; and so they are not in the number of his children. The defires of fuch as are born from above, are after heaven more than earth; their fatisfaction greater in the favour of God, and in the hope of the future enjoyment of him, than in all that the world can do for them: let the world be theirs in its best dress, they would still say with reference to it, I would not live always. this brings to the

II. Inquiry, viz. Why a child of God would

not always live in this present state?

When he acts like himself, it is not only or chiefly upon the account of what he here suffereth, or is liable to suffer, that he desires to be soon removed out of this world. Upon such an account, a wicked man may not only not desire to live always, but be very eager and earnest to die; hoping to be rid of present trouble, and at rest in the grave. 'Tis common for men in distress to wish for death, as having no other notion of it than of its being a freedom from their present pain or misery; tho' there is reason to fear, in the case of many, it would be an entrance into a far worse. And 'tis possible a child

a child of God, may be carried to utter him-felf thus, from too impatient a fense of what he suffers. Thus Jonah, in a pet, prays, Now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live, Jonah iv. 3. And Job, in the verse before the text, thro' the greatness of his anguish, expresseth himself as in great haste to break away, my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life, as if he should say, to go by a violent speedy death out of the world, is preserable to such a life as mine is in it. But when any good men speak thus, it is not speaking as becomes the generation of God's children: this is not speaking suitably to their character, but casting a blemish upon it.

'Tis of the justifiable grounds we are to inquire, on which a child of God speaking like himself, may and will say, as to this present state, I would not live always. And here

1. A child of God would not live always, because it is the will of God he should not.

Whatever weans others from the present world, or makes them willing or desirous to leave it, the will of God, is what a saint looks to, and is chiefly influenced by. By whomsoever God is overlook'd or neglected, thus his servants pay their homage to him, making his will their own will. His pleasure is declared: Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return, Gen. iii. 19. This the believer reads with application, I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the bouse appointed for all living, Job xxx. 23. And thereupon adds, I would not live always. The will of God shall bound and determine mine: I would

not vex or repine at it, but calmly submit to it, as wisest and best.

God has faid, this shall not be the place of my constant residence, my everlasting abode; and I would not look upon it as such, or desire it should. His pleasure I would fall in with, and this not by constraint, as all must do; but from approbation and choice, as the fix'd order

of one that does all things well.

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A God of infinite wisdom and justice, power and grace, hath appointed man's time in the present world, and fixt his bounds that he cannot pass. And tho' it is not known to any but himself, when life with any shall end, 'tis his determination, as to all the inhabitants of this world, that sooner or later they shall leave it, and move off. And as this is what he hath acquainted me with, I say Amen to it, the will of the Lord be done. 'Tis but reasonable, his will should determine mine, and I here declare it doth, and shall: I am willing it should, whenever it is fignify'd to me. The pleafing of his will, and being pleased with it, is what living and dying I aim at. This the Apostle mentions as his temper, and it is one becoming every fincere Christian, For none of us liveth to bimself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live. we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's, Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

2. Saints would not live always, from the concern and zeal they have for God's glory.

'Tis declared that they are here in this world in a state of trial, in order to another; that ve-

rily there is a reward for the righteous, and a God that judgeth: And therefore his fervants shall be sometime rewarded, and his enemies punished, and a difference made between the righteous and the wicked: but this is not generally done in the present life. Upon which, his providence is denied, or question'd; his government and perfection are difown'd or reproach'd; daring finners arguing from his filence, either that there is no God, or that he has no regard to what is done below. And hence God's people's trust in him is derided as vain and fruitless, as if things shall never go better with them than now, and their enemies continually fay to them, Where is your God? Pfal. xlii. 3. Where are his appearances for you, or the evidences of his mindfulness of you? or any of the great things you fay he will bestow? Now that such reproaches may be roll'd away, faints are willing to be gone from a state where God's honour would fo much fuffer, should they always remain in it, and no more difference be made between them that fear him, and them that fear him not.

The Glory of God is of all things most dear to his children. The reproaches of them that reflect on him, fall upon them, and wound them to their very hearts. And as their continuance upon earth would be made an handle for reflecting upon God; to prevent this, they are willing to remove, and they wait with desire and hope, that (whatever is suggested to the contrary) their heavenly father will in the fittest season, send for them his children, and will not fail to manifest

manifest his glorious justice before all the worldby advancing them to the highest felicity, and dismissing his and their enemies to endless misery. That God may be glorisied, his people desire to

be gone from the present state.

3. A faint would not live always; but from love to Christ is willing to depart. He knows he came to redeem his people from this prefent world; to redeem them out of it, and purchase for them a better; that he made this one request in his dying prayer for them, That they might be with him where he is, and that he went hence to prepare for their coming, and now ever lives to make intercession for them. in expectation of it, and to keep open the way for it. Now lovers of Christ would not leave him any reason to complain of their backwardness in making returns of love to him. And as it will be his fatisfaction and honour, to have all his members with him; that he may not mis of it, they should every one fay for himself, the love of Christ can't but make me averse to a lafting stay here, and defirous of the contrary. Shall the eternal Son of God, affume our nature, and die in our stead? do and suffer so much to bring us to heaven, and take fo much pleafure in the prospect of this, as part of the joy that was fet before bim? And shall I defire to live always at this distance from him? And should another, and another, defire this, and the defire be granted, how would Christ's vast undertaking be accomplished?

4. A Child of God would not live here always, but behave after the example of Christ.

The members, in their measure, have the same mind in them that was in their head; and as be was, so are they in this world, I John iv. 17. He came into the world, not to abide in it, but to accomplish his work, and then return. Accordingly, all the time he lived upon earth he had heaven in his eye; and as foon as he had finished the work that was given him to do, he prayed, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own felf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, John xvii. 5. In like manner, every one of Christ's members in imitation of him, should be willing to go from hence when they can hope their work is done, and not be defirous of living always here. The christian knows, he has work to do, as Christ had, about which he would be employed with all his might, to prepare for his remove: And when this is done, instead of defiring to remain here, he should be waiting to be gone: Of this Christ has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.

5. A Child of God would not live always, as feeling the evils of the present state, and having the believing prospect of a better, and as thereupon making a just comparison concerning the

value of each:

First, Those on earth that are even got nearest to heaven in preparation for it, are impersect as to grace, and have much of the remains of corruption in them.

Their knowledge of God is little: their faith is weak, and often put hard to it to stand its ground against the workings of unbelief: their love

love to God is too faint, and fuch as does not cast out all strangeness, doubts and fears. And who that is duly sensible of this, can be willing always to remain below?

How feelingly does the Apostle complain, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death, Rom. vii. 24. This sits heavily upon the saints, and makes them less in love with the present life. 'Tis matter of grief and shame to them, that they are yet so unlike to God, can do so little for him, and that the whole of what they do, is done in so imperfect a manner, that a thousand slaws attend their best services, and they often offend him both

by fins of omiffion and commission.

They look up and think, how it is with the faints above: how pure, how spotless they are; how perfect their conformity to God and Christ is; with what flames of love they are constantly carried towards him; how raifed their praifes are, and how finless their services. And from fuch views they cannot but reflect with the greatest concern upon the fad difference which is in their tempers and frames from those of the faints in light. Whilst they are freed from all fin, and ferving God without defects, fin, they may fay, cleaves to my nature; and it mixes with all my duties, will they cry. Though I hope the guilt of fin is removed by pardoning grace; yet I feel I am not clear from all impurity, as they are. Though the reigning power of fin be broken by the spirit of holiness, I am not wholly rid of it, this bleffed deliverance I want. Sin still darkens my mind, disorders my affections, diftemdistempers my spirit, indisposes me for the worship and service of God, and deadens and distracts me in it; and so hath often deprived me of the benefit I might otherwise have reaped and hath often rendered sabbaths, and sermons, and ordinances, useless and unprofitable to me in a

great measure.

I hope I can fay, I would fain be more like to God, and walk more closely with him: but, O how does indwelling corruption keep me back, and clog and hinder every step? What opposition does it make, when in the most solemn manner I am about to draw nigh to God? How doth it distract my heart, after the greatest pains I have taken with it, to prepare it for waiting upon God, and so proves a root of bitterness, robbing God of his glory, and my soul of that peace and comfort I might otherwise enjoy? And as I shall not be wholly free from it, whilst I am upon earth; in such a state I would not always live.

2. Saints whilst on earth are in a state of sorrow as well as sin. Man in general is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. And though they would not for this always presently wish an end to be put to their days; yet they can't desire that they should always last. And we, saith the Apostle, We believers that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. The miseries they suffer in the body, and, from it, under the hand of God, and from the malice and rage of the World, often force them to this manifestation of uneasiness. This very body, this earthly house is subject to so many calamities, as may well make

make us weary of it, and groan to be delivered from it.

How many ways doth pain and fickness enter into the body? and how swiftly is it communicated and spread through the whole of our sless? and when we find the dwelling inconvenient in it, it can't but be desirable to remove. There is not a place so pleasant, but hath its unsitness; nor any friend so amiable, but hath something to give distaste; nor any thing so sweet, but hath something bitter in it. And what should be the use of all this but to wean us from such a life and state, and make us willing to be removed from it?

'Tis certainly another kind of life that we shall have with God. He will wipe all tears from the eyes of his children, when called home to dwell with him. They shall want no good with him, nor endure, or so much as fear any evil. But how far different is it with us here? What wearisome days and restless nights do we experience? And, as these are commonly more or less to be expected, well may one that feels that here is not his rest, say, I would not bere live always.

3. Saints are here in a state of warfare, put to wrestle not only against sless and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12. We have all of us an adversary the Devil, which walketh about as a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour. His subtilty and power is great, his rage cruel, his activity and diligence unwearied, and we are to combat with him for the highest

prize,

prize, the heavenly glory: and as the fight is to last as long as we live, upon this as well as other grounds, the conflicting christian would not

live always.

4. Saints are here upon their trial as probationers for eternity; and fo must be full of care and folicitude, how it shall go with them, and left they should miscarry. They that are entred into the new Jerusalem, are made pillars in the Temple of God, and shall go out no more: But this, Saints on earth are but in their way to. And confidering the fnares wherewith the way is fet, and the danger they are in, the multitudes who (to appearance) have bid fair for Heaven that yet have fallen and perished, compared with the few that have escaped and are faved: how full of concern must they be, during their stay upon earth, for which reason they defire to be gone in God's time, and not to live always upon earth.

5. In the present state, Saints are at a distance from Christ. He is gone to Heaven, and a veil is drawn between him and them. Their love is placed upon him, and they are vitally united to him: but whilst they are at home in the Body, they are absent from the Lord. And as to be with Christ, is the joyous fruition of Heaven, they have reason to say of the best condition upon earth, We would not live in it always, We de-

fire to quit it to be with Christ.

Christ is now in us, the hope of glory: But our enjoyment of him is very imperfect, in comparison of what we expect. And if we have any true love to Christ, we must needs desire

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to be with him, to behold his glory, and receive the communications of his Love in an higher degree. If we know any thing of the sweetness of communion with him, we must needs breathe after fuller measures of it. And the sense how it is with us in our present state, wherein we know so little of our Lord, and love him less; wherein we continue to sin against him, and smart under the bitter fruits of sin, and wherein we dwell among those who provoke and dishonour him every day, may well make us sigh to be at home, in all the Glory Christ went before us to make ready; which cannot be attain'd to but by dying.

Do we not own it to be best to be with Christ? that there is the best company, and the best place, and the best condition and state, and best enjoyments? And can an heir of these defire to live always, and not long to be gone? faying, I groan under this diffance and absence from my dearest Lord. Were it put to my choice, I would venture upon any difficulty, danger, and death, rather than it should continue. If there be no way to come to heaven but by dying, I would rather die to be there, than live in this absence from Christ. What is there in this earthly tabernacle, or the present world, that I should so love to abide in them, as not to be willing to quit them that I may be present with the Lord?

Lastly, A child of God may say, I would not always live in this present state, as having had

some foretastes of a better.

Vol. I.

Some-

Something of heaven may be let down into the foul of a child of God, by which he can never after relish the comforts of earth, so as before he did. What fuch have had granted of this is real: and though but imperfect, yet it is fweet and pleasant, and a pledge of more; and so it ftrongly carries off the heart from all things here below, and raises it above them. How insipid are all the pleasures in the world compared with one hour's communion with Jesus Christ? And if a glimpse of him be so reviving, what will it be to behold him with open face? If his presence with us here, which is but sparingly granted, yield us so much comfort, how much more will it yield us above, when we shall enjoy it in its fulness, and be ever with him the Lord? But as this is not to be expected in this transitory world, a Saint defires to be and live with him always. He is the chiefest among ten thousand, altogether lovely. Since I faw him, and tafted of his love, I can love nothing else in comparison of him, and would be glad to be for ever with him, will the Saint fay.

III. What is implied in a Saint's faying when he speaks thus, or such words as these of the

text, he would not live always.

1. This is implied, viz. That he believes he is one who is already, through grace, prepared for a better life.

2. This may be implied and taught, that whilst in this world, a child of God should think and speak, not as an inhabitant of it, but as a traveller through it; not as one fixt here, nor desiring to be so, but as one in motion towards

wards a better country, that is, an heavenly, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it.

IV. In what manner should a child of God thus speak, I would not live always? I answer,

I. With a deep fense of the evil of sin, which hath made this world so undesirable; upon the account of which, and the misery that follows it, he hath much reason to say, I would not live

always.

2. With great seriousness, upon the consideration, how awful a thing it is to die. I would not live always; viz. bere: But there is another state I have a prospect of, which is never to end; and into that I expect to pass, and all my life

long, would be preparing for it.

3. Not as peremptorily fixing the time to what date he would have his life drawn out, or when cut off; but with intire refignation, referring the matter to God. How long or little while I shall live, belongs to him who sent me into the world, and knoweth the fittest season to call me away.

V. To whom may a Saint speak this?

I. To God by way of appeal, I would not live always, i. e. O God, I have compared the two states, this in which I now am, and that which is revealed in the Gospel, to which I am invited; and am come to a determination, and have taken up the resolve, I would not live always upon earth, at so long a remove from thee and heaven.

2. To others we may utter this, when speaking of the concerns of our souls, and of eternity, to engage them to regard us, as those that

are dying, and well fatisfy'd in the choice we have made ourselves, of God for our portion, and heaven as our home: And as desiring, if possible, to lead them to make the same choice with us.

3. To himself. Whatever my hand findeth to do, while I do live, let me do it with all my might, seeing there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave whither I am going.

APPLICATION.

1. How admirable is the Grace of God in the change it makes in his people! admirable indeed, as changing their tempers, their hearts, their hopes, their defires; conquering their love of life, and fear of dying; reconciling them to the will of God, and enabling them to fay, not in a pang or fit, but deliberately, and upon folid and just ground, I would not live always.

2. What reason have we to bless God for the discoveries of the Gospel, whereby life and immortality is brought to light? We should never have been willing to let go earth, without the

promise and prospect of heaven.

3. As ever any of you would fay upon good grounds, I would not live always, viz. bere. Make fure of a title to a better life and state; and often compare the two states together, the fin, fears and sorrows of this present one, and the joy, and glory, and blessedness of that to come. Let all the evil you feel in the present state, quicken your desires after a better: and let what you look for above, keep you from sainting under present sufferings. Let the thoughts

thoughts of heaven be fweeter to you, than the thoughts of any thing you can enjoy upon earth during your stay, and enough to fill the room of what you must leave behind, when called away.

Beg frequently and earnestly for the spirit of Christ, the spirit of life and consolation, to draw up your hearts from earth to heaven, and to make you willing to be gone. You have found that here is not your rest; nor can it be,

because it is polluted.

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nd om the Look up therefore to the heavenly glory, as real, and great, and near you; and after it, think what a child of God shall gain by dying. Your sinning and suffering time shall then be over, your warfare accomplished, your race run, your complaints removed upon the account of your distance from your loved and defired Lord: Your graces shall be perfected, and your corruptions rooted out, and the body of death put off with the body of sless: All spots shall be wash'd from your souls, all tears wip'd from your eyes, all your pains forgot, and your groans at an end: Everlasting joy shall be upon your heads, and sorrow and sighing shall slee away.

SERMON XIII.

JOB XV. II. More da Wash

Are the consolations of God small with thee?

HESE are the words of Eliphaz to Job, upbraiding him with his temper and car-

riage under his afflictions.

The charge he endeavours to fasten upon him, imports that Job neglected and contemn'd what he and his other friends had, according to the will of God, advised him to, even to repentance; and that thereby Job had put a slight upon, and a stop to receiving divine consolations, which could both support him at present under his sufferings, and in a little while deliver him from them, as he would find, if he did not go on to reject them.

This was not speaking that which was right to Job, but to how many will it agree, whose thoughts are continually running out on what God hath laid upon them, or taken from them, and all the while overlooking the goodness of God they are witnesses to? This fault is what Eliphaz points at, as if it was in Job: And it is certainly what every one should be excited to guard against. Are the consolations of God small

with thee?

Some take the words to be an expostulation with Job, shewing him the unreasonableness of impatience or despondency, how sad soever were his case, while having the consolations of God to make recourse to: As if Eliphaz should say to him, Is it a difficult thing for God to comfort? Are the comforts of God infufficient? Are thy forrows fo many and grievous as to be more powerful to fink thee, than the confolations of God are to raise thee up? Is it a work too big for God, to put an end to thy afflictions, fcatter thy clouds, and turn thy forrow into joy? Can any thing be too hard for the Almighty? Is not his goodness infinite and unmeasurable? Hath he not balm enough in store to heal thy wounds, and treasure enough in stock to repair thy losses? Say, thy case is as dark and distressed as ever any one's was, thy sufferings as fore as possible, they are but the sufferings of a creature: But the comforts before thee are the consolations of God; and are the consolations of God small with thee?

But these certainly are used by his friend here, as a reproof to Job for the complaints he had uttered under his sufferings? as if he had not been duly, nor at all attentive to the divine consolations; in which sense I shall consider them. And as this inattentiveness is a common sault, (tho' Job was very uncharitably charged with it now) the observation I would make is

this.

Even the servants of God under afflictions, are apt to lose the sense of divine consolations, and to behave, as if they were small with them.

P 4

Under

Under this,

I. I shall consider the Consolations here spoken

of, ascribed to God.

II. Inquire when the fervants of God under affliction, may be faid to lose the sense of these.

III. Shew that this they are liable to, and

whence it proceeds.

IV. The finfulness of not attending to divine confolations, or making light of them under afflictions.

V. The use of all.

I. Concerning the Confolations here spoken of, which are ascribed to God.

Confolation is faid to be God's, as he is the father and fountain of it: All true confolation is of and from him.

- 1. By way of eminency. No comforts like the comforts of God. We read of the pleasures of fin, the satisfaction men take or aim at in gratifying their senses and irregular defires. But how little do these deserve the name? the mirth of the wicked is madness, and will end in torment: but the comforts of God are comforts indeed, the beginnings of heaven, and which will lead to it.
- 2. By way of fovereign disposal; as in and from him alone, consolation is to be had. As none can comfort like him, so none without or in opposition to him. None but as made use of by him; as every person and thing is that to us, which God makes it. In him the springs of all consolations are sound and fix'd. Hence he is called, the fountain of living waters; and all things

things else having no communication with him, broken cisterns, Jer. ii. 13. All consolation belongs to God, and must be had in and from him, in whatever measure enjoy'd. Thus he fpeaks of himself in relation to his redeemed. Ha. li. 12. I, even I am be that comforteth you. And the experience of his fervants witneffeth this, 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. Bleffed be God, who comforteth us in all our tribulation. And to him the eyes of every one in diffress are to be turn'd, as he that comforteth those that are cast down, 2 Cor. vii. 6. Luke ii. 25.

Christ who is called the consolation of Israel, came out from the Father; and upon his going hence, he tells his Disciples, John xiv. 16. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for

ever.

Under any trouble, outward or inward, there is no creature can contribute any thing to our relief or comfort, without the commission or leave of God. One man can bestow riches or honours on another: but God only can give comfort. For this we are to trade to heaven, as being not to be fetch'd from any coast upon earth. 'Tis easy for us to be the causes of sorrow to ourselves, or procure our own trouble: but consolation is the gift, and proper work of God. He only can comfort in outward affliction, as he can command the creature; and relieve under inward trouble, as he can convince the conscience. None can do either of these, but God; therefore confolations are faid to be his. The Hebrew word for comfort, fignifies Speaking

speaking to the heart, which is the prerogative and work of him that made it. Man may speak to the ear; but how long may this be done to a person in distress, and to no purpose, till God speak to the heart? If we at any time comfort others, 'tis with the consolations wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

3. The confolations of God, note the plenty and variety in which they belong to him. He is the God of all confolation; hath enough to delight the fouls of all his fervants, under all their troubles of every kind, and degree, and to delight those of every age among them. With God is the fountain of life and comfort, ready to flow out with the greatest freedom and abundance, suitable to the wants and distresses of his servants. Thou, saith David, shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side, Pfalm lxxi. 21. The Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places, Isa. li. 3.

4. The consolations of God imply their power and efficacy. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? Job xxxviii. 28, 29. Thus saith the Lord, as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be com-

forted in Jerusalem, Isa. lxvi. 13.

No trouble or distress can be too great for divine consolations to over-balance. The consolations of God are sufficient to keep the soul from sinking under the heaviest burden, and to bring us to say, "Thou hast comforted me, and I "was comforted." Blessed be God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

So

So much for the first thing, the Confolations of God.

II. When may they be faid to be fmall with

his fervants under affliction?

ready to faint under their afflictions. If these prove not sufficient to bear us up under the trials of the present time, we carry it as if they were small indeed, and give occasion for the question to be put, Are the confolations of God small with thee? Or are they not so in thy esteem and value? Or as to any strength setched from them, seeing they are of so little use to keep

thee from finking?

2. When we grow impatient under affliction, if we are not speedily delivered, or as soon as we desire or expect. Wherein shall the power and efficacy of the divine consolations be seen, if not in keeping us mute under his rod, and in enabling us in patience to possess our souls amidst our forest and longest sufferings; they affording us so much as we may put in the balance against them? If we grow impatient or fretful, instead of submitting to the will of God, 'tis plain his consolations are too much forgotten, or slighted, and so may be said to be small with us.

3. When we have recourse to any other method for ease and deliverance from trouble, than that which God has appointed, of waiting upon him, and looking to him. We are bid to wait upon God, and keep his way, under the comfortable promise of sufficient support, and a comfortable issue in the sittest season; but if

we cannot or will not trust God, but labour to break from under his hand, how little do his consolations signify to us, that cannot hold us to our duty, in which way only they can be expected to be efficacious? and if they do not prevail to bring us into this way, they may just-

Iy be faid, to be small with us.

4. When we are full of anxious disquieting thoughts, what will become of us, if our afflictions continue longer; or if we should be called to suffer more; or when we add to the burden of present sufferings, new doubts and sears, encreasing our dejection, as if no provision was made for our relief. When the people of God give way to this under affliction, the comforts of God may be said to be small with them.

III. Even the servants of God themselves, are apt to give way to such complaints and grievings under their afflictions, that it may be said the consolations of God are small with them. How apt are the best to faint in the day of adversity; as if they had never heard of divine

confolations?

This proceeds,

1. From the grievousness or weight of affliction itself, especially of some sorts of it, under which 'tis not easy to bear up, or behave ourselves as we ought. Standers by can scarce conceive what the people of God sometimes lie under. How seelingly does Job speak of this? Chap. vi. 2, 3, 4. O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance together! for now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.

Thus,

Thus, God sometimes shews his people bard things, and makes them drink of the wine of assonishment, Psalm lx. 3. They reel and stagger under what they feel as an insupportable load; especially when outward and inward troubles meet, and their minds are wounded and filled with horror, as well as their bodies with pain. How grievous is such a load as this!

2. From the weakness and imperfection of grace, and the strength of the remains of corruption. There is more of this last in the best than they are aware of, or than it may be, they would believe, till brought to the trial. And

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1. Their thoughts are held down to what they suffer, and seem wholly taken up with it, and looking only to this, they are ready to sink; they not attending to the provisions made for their support, by reason of the weakness of grace under their pressing affliction. Their thoughts are often thrown into the utmost confusion, which sets them farther off from regarding the consolations of God, and adds at once to their sin and misery: our own thoughts wound us deeper, and make us feel more than the affliction would otherwise do.

2. Amidst so much confusion and affliction, if they think of God, they apprehend him departed from them, or turned against them, accounting them his enemies, and treating them as such; whereby they are more and more dejected and ready to faint, questioning his love instead of regarding his comforts; and saying, Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath be in anger shut up

bis tender mercies? They forget the exhortation that speaketh to them as children under the rod. And conclude, because they are corrected, they are none of the family: or if the affliction be long, that they are utterly rejected, Ifa. xlix. 14. Zion said, the Lord bath forsaken me, and my Lord bath forgotten me. And as their life is bound up in his love, the apprehension of his displeasure wounds them to the heart. Through the weakness of grace, when meeting with affliction they are eager and hafty for deliverance, and apt to grow impatient, or fink, if it is not presently vouchsafed. They not considering the advantage of waiting God's leifure, and not attending to the confolations of God which would move them to do it, these, as not regarded, have little influence upon them, and may be faid to be small with them. Now

IV. We are to confider the finfulness of not attending to the consolations of God, or of making

light of them under affliction.

1. The consolations of God are great in themfelves; and 'tis an high affront to him, that they should be small with us. The consolations in God, the consolations from him, and the consolations with him, are great.

1. The consolations that are in God, those of which he is the object, or such as are contained in his nature and perfections, and the relations in which he stands to his people, are great.

All these are the fountain of believers consolation; and a fountain that through Christ is unsealed, and stands open to them. He is a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness;

of never-failing compassion, faithfulness, and love, who has taken them into covenant with him, and through Christ is become their reconciled Father. And shall any thing belonging to the great and infinitely blessed God, be reckoned of or treated as small?

Where shall we find comfort, if not in God? and what are all the comforts of the world if compared to his? How many cases may a christian be in, where he may turn from one perfon and thing to another, and have reason in the issue to say as Job of his friends, miserable com-

forters are ye all, till he turns to God.

He can cure all diseases, supply all wants, overcome all enemies, deliver in all dangers, succour his servants under all the trials of life, be intimately with them when going through the valley of the shadow of death, and be their everlasting portion beyond it. Sooner may he want water that has the sea, or land that has all the earth, or light that has the sun, than he want matter or ground of comfort, who has an interest in God. Would christians but think what God is, according to the description he gives of himself in his word, and as he makes over himself to them in his covenant, what a wrong and dishonour to him would it appear to treat his consolations as small?

There is no case in which a Saint can need consolation, but he is encouraged to look for it from some or other of the persections of God.

(1.) He is one of infinite wisdom, and by this ready and engaged to be their counsellor. In the thickest darkness, he can and will be a light

light to them; make their way plain before them; fave them from the deceitfulness of fin. and devices of fatan; and dispose and order all that befals them, to do fo in the best proportion, and the fittest season: so that though they know not at present the design or meaning of his dealings, they may be fatisfied he is doing all things well. He is well acquainted with all our troubles, and has the ordering of them, and this by a wisdom that cannot err. And how many ways has infinite wifdom to contrive, and provide for our support, and turn all to our

good!

(2.) He is one of almighty power, and by this he is able, and has undertaken to protect and guard his people; and hence they may be comforted amidst all the opposition they meet with, or the evils they are exposed to. Stronger is he that is with them, than all that are in the world: and if God be for us, who can be against us? Who is like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth on the heavens for the help of his people, and in his excellency upon the sky, Deut. xxxiii. 26. He is their rock and fortress, their deliverer and strength, the born of their salvation, and their high tower, Pfal. xviii. 2. Can any thing be too hard for the Lord?

What cannot omnipotency do, to prevent, or arm us against all that we can fear? and to support and carry us through all that we can feel? and as this is by love always imployed in the believers behalf, how firm and large is the ground of his confolation? Where can he be fafe, if not in the hand of omnipotence? How great is their

happi-

happiness for whom it is engaged? and how comfortable should they live under the sense of

it? Farther,

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(3.) He is a God of infinite goodness and mercy, and of the tenderest compassion; and fo, fympathizes with his people under all their troubles, and is inclined to relieve and comfort them: And hence they have the greatest encouragement to go to him, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 'Tis the name God has taken to himself, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. And 'tis proclaimed on purpose that his people may have recourse to him under all their troubles, as a fountain of consolation, Jer. xxxi. 12. They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord; and their foul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

(4.) He is a God every where present, and this as to his people in a way of grace. This adds to the comfort to be drawn from his other persections: as infinitely wise and powerful, and gracious, he is able and inclined to succour his people; and as he is always at hand he'll not defer it. He keeps company with them in all their afflictions, as a present help in time of trouble. No place makes a separation between God and them. Whithersoever they may be driven, 'tis not in the power of those that hate them most, to deprive them of the presence of God, their great delight. Every believer may say, where-ever I am, I am with God, and he with

me; and what confolation is wrapt up in this, to revive and comfort the most troubled heart!

(5.) He is unchangeable and everlasting in his being and perfections, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever: the same in himself; with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning: And the same in his relation to his people; their friend, their sather, their God. This God is our God for ever and ever, Psal. xlviii. 14. He is the eternal God; and while he is so, he will be their God and portion, which is all that they can wish or need. These are the consolations in God, in his nature and perfections, and relations to his people; all which speak their own greatness and worth.

2. The confolations from God may also be said to be great: those that he hath made provision for, and laid a foundation of, in his Son, by his

Spirit and by his Word and Ordinances.

(1.) In his Son, on whom our help is laid, as an all-sufficient Saviour; and who is made perfect through sufferings in order to it: in whom it pleaseth the Father that all fulness should dwell, and of whose sulness all believers receive, and

grace for grace, John i. 16.

He is called the Confolation of Israel. So glorious a person as the eternal Son of God, purchased this for his Israel by his death, and is carrying it on by his intercession at the right-hand of God. 'Tis he that is the Lamb slain to remove the cause of our trouble, and obtain whatever may relieve and comfort us, by making our peace with God, procuring the pardon of sin, healing our wounds, conquering our enemies, and becom-

becoming the captain of our falvation. What diftress can a believer now be in? what forrow can
he name, against which a sufficient remedy may
not be fetched from Christ? what can be said to
his discomfort, that cannot be answered by looking unto Jesus?

Am I troubled upon the account of fin? I may look to the fatisfaction of his blood, the fanctification of his Spirit, and his gracious undertaking not only to give me the victory, but to fet me

entirely free from all fin.

As to our temptation from fatan, he was in all points tempted like unto his brethren, fin only excepted; that he might compassionate and succour those of whom he has the care; and accordingly has prayed, that their faith fail not, and has promised them grace sufficient for them.

Under spiritual desertion, 'tis a relieving thought, that he was forsaken of God for a time, that we

might not be left for ever.

And as to external trouble and affliction, for his fake God deals with us as a father with his children, defigning not to destroy, but to purify and refine those that belong to his family. And we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

How great are the confolations from God, by

the hand of his Son!

(2.) He comforts by his Spirit. His name and office is the Comforter, fent forth by the Father upon Christ's ascension, to dwell in the hearts of his children, and to guide, encourage, and chear them in their way to heaven.

Q2 (3.) What

(3.) What a flock of consolation hath God laid up in his word? particularly in the promises of it, which may well be the believer's songs in

the house of his pilgrimage.

We have the promises of pardon of sin, freedom from condemnation, safe conduct through this world, and heaven in another: and what can we desire more? We have promises suited to every state: What strait can be so great? what pressure so grievous? what trial so fore, but we have full consolation offered under it in the promises? There we have the kind things God hath spoken with design to give relief under troubles, inward and outward, bodily and spiritual, and under both together.

He hath promised his presence in all our afflictions, Isa. xliii. 2. When thou passes through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. I will be with thee to protect and guide, support and comfort thee. He knows the souls of his servants in adversities, which includes his seasonable succour and help, Psalm xxxi. 7. He hath engaged to lay no more upon them, than he will enable them to bear; to proportion their burden to their strength, or give them strength answerable to the trial; and in a word, that all things shall work together

for their good, Rom. viii. 28.

To these add, the delight God hath vouchsafed, and which his people have experienced in his ordinances, from his presence with them, and influence upon them; leading them to say, it is good for me to draw nigh to God, a day in his courts is better than a thousand any where else. These are the consolations from God, which he offers, and effects. And what a distemper of soul are they under, who think them small?

3. As to the Confolations with God : Eye, 'tis faid, bath not feen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, I Cor. ii. 9. The Pfalmift speaks of it with a note of wonder, Pfalm xxxi. 19. O bow great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men! In the prefence of God there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. And when the confolations of God include all this, what guilt doth it bring upon that foul by which they are difregarded? The confolations of God are great in themselves; and to make light of them is a high affront to him.

ther aggravated, from the unworthiness of the person by whom they are slighted. Are the Confolations of God small with thee? Shall one that might have been in hell, make light of the joys of heaven? How unworthy is any of Adam's apostate race of savour from God? Upon the account of sin, how justly liable to his wrath? In what danger, O my soul! hast thou been of being cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? Think of the majesty thou hast offended, the Law thou hast broken, the punishment thou hast deserved, and which thou must endure for ever, should God deal with thee according to

Q 3

thy fins. Look down to the burning lake: liften to the cries and lamentations of those wretched creatures that are tormented in those flames. This was all that by nature thou couldst claim, or expect as thy portion: and when instead of this, God offers to be reconciled to thee. promifing upon thy return, to receive thee graciously, and love thee freely, pardon all thine iniquities, fave thee from the wrath to come, and bring thee at last to heaven and glory, and

are these consolations small with thee?

3. As the question may respect a child of God, the finfulness of making light of divine confolations, may be farther urged from the obligations fuch are under to him, for what he has done for them, and bestow'd upon them. Art thou one of those, whom he hath set apart for himself? wash'd in the blood of his Son, and fanctified by his Spirit? adopted into his family, and made heir to his kingdom? fpoken kindly concerning, for many years to come, even for a long eternity, to which thou shalt be brought in the appointed feason? And are the consolations of God notwithstanding, small with thee?

4. How great the folly of our making light of divine confolations, who must have recourse to these, or have none; there being no secret reserve to be relied upon? Is there any secret thing with thee? to use the words next to those of the text. What confolations can be had worthy of the name, that are not divine? Where are they to be found, and how long will they last? and upon the account of these fancies are the confolations of God to be treated as small?

5. Are the consolations of God small with thee, when being in affliction? How unbecoming is this in such as are acquainted with their fountain, God, and know how strongly joying in them is urged upon such as belong'd to him? Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and again I say, rejoice. And that such may not seem at liberty to omit it under trouble and affliction, they are bid to rejoice evermore, I Thess. v. 16. Our groaning under affliction ought not to silence our praises for the consolation of God.

A fervant of God has more matter of comfort and delight in him, than reason of sorrow, upon the account of what he suffers. Hence Paul and Silas sung in a prison, Acts xvi. 25. And the apostle declares, I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation, 2 Cor.

vii. 4.

God's all-sufficiency, and heaven's happiness, are everlasting grounds of consolation to the suffering christian; and should make him say with David, in the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. And tho afflictions may somewhat damp, it is not to ex-

tinguish that delight.

How many are the helps, and how strong the motives to holy consolation and joy? To raise us to this, the consolations of God take in his giving us himself, as our felicity and portion; his appointing his Son to be our redeemer and Saviour, in the most affecting manner to ransom us from sin and Satan, death and hell; and so to recover us to God and our happiness in him. And the Holy Ghost layeth the foundation of

Q.4

our comfort in regeneration, and leadeth on to it in a way of holiness, and maintains, strengthens. and confirms it, as a feal and earnest in the hearts whereinto it is fent to dwell, 2 Cor. i, 22,

There is enough in the confolations of God to balance the heaviest afflictions: But where these are refused, all other delights will be of little use to keep from fainting in a time of trouble; fo that they wrong their own fouls, by whom the confolations of God are reckon'd as small.

Thus have I done with the doctrinal part. To

bring home all to ourselves by way of use.

APPLICATION.

1. What a wonder is it that there is any fuch thing as the confolation of God, abundant confolation to be heard of in this world! When we had entered into rebellion against God, how justly might he have pour'd upon us the fierceness of his wrath, under the pressures of which, we wretched creatures might have found no place for any thing but cries and groans? But he loadeth us with his benefits: furely he deals not with us according to our fins.

2. Is there so much guilt involved in treating the confolations of God as small? Let his afflicted children beware of this, by giving way to overmuch dejection and forrow. Pore not always on the dark fide of your state. of the dishonour it brings to God, what a reproach on his ways, how it gratifies Satan, faddens the hearts of those whom God would not have fadden'd, and tends to discourage others from joining the generation of them that feek

him, and hope in him.

Are the consolations of God small with you? And is it a light thing they should be deem'd so? Why so much dejected? Is there no balm in Gilead, no comfort in God? Is it for nothing, that he hath taken to himself the title of the God of all Consolation? Is there any evil that the consolations of God cannot countervail?

3. Let God have the glory of any consolation you have had from him, and do yet enjoy: and remember how it is with many others, and pity and pray for them, and be helpful to them.

4. Under all your troubles, make conscience of applying to your Father in heaven, in the name of your advocate with him Jesus Christ, as the father and sountain of consolation. And let the gift of his son confirm your faith, as to whatever else you can ask according to his will. He is willing that the heirs of promise, even in their travelling state, should have strong consolation.

'Tis needless to go any where else for comfort, and would be in vain. Needless; as none of our troubles and afflictions can be too large for the consolations of God to relieve us against: And 'twould be in vain; for if God do not succour and support, help and comfort, none else can.

To him therefore we are to have recourse, in inward and outward distress. He can both prepare us for comfort, by removing whatever hinders and is contrary to it in ourselves, and kindly work it, in the season and degree that he shall see best.

And as ever you would have folid confolation.

1. Value.

1. Value, and labour after grace and holiness, as the ground of it. Be as earnest for grace, as

for comfort and peace.

2. Expect the comfort you need in God's way, by humbling yourselves, and turning to God in case you have sinned, and carefully attending his ordinances and the institutions of his house.

3. Wait for comfort in God's time, and prefume not to prescribe to him; but continue to pray and look up.

For your encouragement.

1. Confider his nature, that he is ready and

willing to comfort.

oulsV :

2. His relation to his people, their father, the most tender and compassionate one. And if earthly parents know how to give good things to their children, how much more shall your heavenly father give his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace and comfort to them that ask him?

3. His omniscience and omnipresence. He knows what comfort we want, in what season, and to what degree: And consider his power, that he is able to raise up, how low soever reduced, and how long soever seemingly left. And may the depth of your distress under present troubles add to your praising songs, when divine consolations shall change the scene, and turn your days of mourning, into days of gladness and joy.

by proceeding the feeton and degree that he

SERMON XIV.

Lo flict that the tis attenue thail be have

1 PET. IV. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

HESE words are very awakening: and in them we have fet before us.

I. The two opposite ranks of men which make up this world, the righteous, and the

ungodly and finner.

Viz. That they shall be faved. But then, as to the way in which their salvation is obtained, 'tis gained scarcely, i. e. with difficulty, much labour, against much opposition, and with great struggle.

III. A just, but awful inference from thence, as to the misery that awaits the ungodly, and finally impenitent: If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and

the finner appear?

Doct. The difficulty wherewith the right ous are saved, may tell the ungodly sinners the certainty and the greatness of their future misery.

Suitable

Suitable to these our work will be.

I. To state the character of the persons spoken of.

II. To shew that the righteous shall be faved,

but yet with difficulty.

Saideline

III. The certain and dreadful mifery that awaits the ungodly: which will lead to the use of the whole.

I. Let us look into the different characters of the person spoken of, the righteous and the un-

godly, the faint and the finner.

The former, the righteous man, is one that is washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God: to whom the Gospel hath been effectually preached, and who has been brought to obey it, and flying for refuge to the hope fet before him, is made accepted in the beloved. whom he hath been enabled to receive. Thro' the righteousness of Christ, he is restored to the favour of God, and by his grace renewed, and made like to him: he is created anew after God's image, and being born from heaven, is in the way of faith and holiness tending thither. He delights in the law of God after the inward man, and endeavours a conformity to it in his whole course of life: and the' he can't say, he has no fin, he has none but what he hates, and had rather part with than keep. He has none that reigns in him, or has dominion over him: None but what he groans under, is heartily engaged in the mortification of, and longs for the time when he shall be wholly delivered from it, and made eternally free.

As

As to parts, he is throughout fanctified; and with reference to degrees of grace, he is going on to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, persecting holiness in the fear of God. The grace of God that bringeth falvation and calleth him to it, hath effectually taught him to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live foberly, righteously and godly in this prefent world. What God requires, he fincerely endeavours to render to him, the fuperlative love of his heart, and the universal, constant persevering obedience of his life; and by patient continuance in well-doing, is feeking for glory, honour and immortality. And in a fense of his imperfections, after all he relies on Christ for eternal life: counting all things but loss that he may win Christ, and be found in him, in order to his acceptance with God the Father, both now, and when called to appear before him at the great day.

This is the righteous man spoken of in the

Text.

On the other hand, the ungodly sinner is one that remains in his natural unconverted state; alienated from the life of God, destitute of his image, dead in trepasses and sins, and walking according to the course of this world, and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2.

To please God, is no part of his business, nor has he any value for the blessedness of seeing and enjoying of him. His heart is placed on the world, and his course answerable. He lives

with-

- Mathor

without God in it, unmindful of him, in rebellion against him: and to add to his guilt and misery, tho' in the Gospel he hears of a Saviour provided and offered, by whom he may be recovered and brought back to God, and accepted of him, he is so far in love with his present state, or secure in it, as ungratefully to neglect so great salvation; and rather than follow the Redeemer in faith and in holiness to heaven, he will still hold on in a course of sin, tho' he is told it will end in eternal death.

This is the man of whose falvation the Apostle speaks, as so hopeless a matter. Where shall the

ungodly and finner appear?

Having thus laid out the character of the Saint, as he is righteous, and of the finner, as he is ungodly.

II. 'Tis allowed in the Text, that the righteous shall be faved, but yet not without difficulty:

If the righteous scarcely be saved.

. Under this, three things are distinctly to be considered.

- 1. That the falvation of the righteous is cer-
 - 2. That it is difficultly obtained. And,

3. From whence the difficulty proceeds.

The falvation of the righteous is certain. The they are scarcely saved, none of them shall be lost. Whatever difficulties lie in their way to heaven, they shall not in the issue come short of it. There is a blessed state before them, which their arrival at, is sure in itself, and sometimes comfortably evident to them.

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In working out their falvation, they may know, their labour shall not be in vain. They know not this by a fond conceit, but on stable grounds that will not leave them ashamed. I know, faith the Apostle, whom I have believed. and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day, 2 Tim. i. 12. And to the same purpose, with what affurance does he speak, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 17. With an eye to this, the Apostle Peter breaks forth in admiration and praise, 1 Pet. i. 3-5. Bleffed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, bath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, referved in heaven for you: who are kept by the power of God thro' faith unto salvation: Wherein, faith he, ye greatly rejoice. Believers, notwithstanding intermediate trouble, may rejoice in hope of their inheritance in heaven, and that with joy unspeakable and full of glory. A prospect of heaven under the evidence of their title to it, has fometimes let down fomething of heaven into their hearts, before they have been called up to the full possession of it.

This has been the privilege of fome of God's children, their falvation has been comfortably,

and even joyously evident to themselves. Tis indeed a special vouchsafement which all have not enjoyed, nor may expect: but whatever doubts they may for a while lie under, salvation

is fure in itself to all the righteous.

To this they are chosen and designed by an unalterable purpose. The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, to be holy in time, and happy to eternity. This the Apostle mentions as a ground of perpetual thanksgiving, in behalf of the believing Thessalonians, 2 Thess. ii. 13. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you. Brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, thro' sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.

'Tis sure by the purchase of Christ. After sin had laid us open to perdition, Christ by dying redeemed us from the wrath to come, and obtained salvation with eternal glory, for us. Hence he is stilled the captain of our salvation, and one made perfect thro' sufferings, for the bringing of

many fons unto glory.

Tis sure by the possession Christ hath taken of this salvation after he hath purchased it, and in the name and behalf of his disciples. All the glory within the veil is included in the salvation the righteous are making towards; and in this ther saith the Apostle, the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, Heb. vi. 20. And his designs in going before, he declares, was to prespare a place for his followers, as resolving to come again, and take them unto himself. How sure may a child reckon an estate, that a tender father

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father or friend hath purchased, and actually taken up for him? This our dear Redeemer hath done for his members. Having laid down his life on the cross, he is risen and ascended to heaven, not only to enter upon his own glory, but to take and keep possession of mansions in his Father's house for his followers, in which they are to live with him. So sure is their salvation upon this ground, that they are spoken of as made to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, Ephes. ii. 6. He sits there as their head, which is a certain pledge, that in the appointed season they shall sit with him in their own persons.

Their falvation is fure upon the account of Christ's intercession, which he ever lives to make, and so is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He pleads the merits of his blood, by which all was purchased, and will not drop his suit, till see the travel of his soul answered in their perfect blessedness.

'Tis sure from the almighty power engaged in favour of the righteous, who are travelling to it. The heavenly inheritance, tho' out of fight, the Apostle tells believers, is kept for them, and that they also are kept by the power of God, thro' faith unto salvation; a power that cannot be overcome, and shall never be withdrawn.

Their falvation is fure, as being promised in the covenant of grace, which is everlasting. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. And the security is the greatest that can be given. God Vol. I. R knows

knows the doubts and fears to which his people are subject: and as willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, consirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have sted for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

Salvation is certain to believers, from the relation in which they stand to God, as children, and his owning himself their God and Father: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and

joint beirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.

Their falvation is certain from the guard of angels appointed to attend them. How comprehensive and comfortable are the Apostle's words concerning this, Heb. i. 14. Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them

which shall be beirs of salvation?

In a word, falvation is fure to the righteous, as being already begun; and he that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, *Philip*. i. 6. He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who intends what he has begun, to be as the earnest and first fruits of what is to follow.

The falvation of the righteous is certain, which was the first thing to be proved under

this fecond general head.

2. 'Tis difficultly obtained.

It may be faid to be fo,

(1.) As to the ground and foundation laid for it. We must consider that in order to our being saved, the eternal Son of God was to assume

our

our nature, and die in our stead: And that he should offer himself on the cross as a propitiation for fin, to fatisfy justice and redeem us from hell, and to purchase eternal life for us; for us that had made ourselves children of wrath, or else we could never have obtained falvation, 'twas a great condescension. Now how scarcely are the righteous faved, when nothing but the blood of the Son of God could avail for their ranfom? when 'tis come to this, that finners, if they are fpared, the great God is not to spare his own Son, but deliver him up for them all; and the Lord of glory is to confent to lay down his life, who could ever have expected this? How amazing is it now when it is revealed? How justly might we have been left to perish: How greatly had we deserved it, having revolted from God without cause, and being become most vile and loathsome? What objections lay in the way of our recovery, which none but God could have answered? What mountains to be removed? What vallies to be filled? And who or what were we, for whom the great God should remove all the difficulties that lay in the way to our being faved?

The falvation of the righteous is apparently difficult as to the ground and foundation neces-

fary to be laid as a preparation for it.

(2.) As to the application of it, falvation is difficult. After all that Christ has done and suffered to purchase salvation, 'tis a work that requires the special power and influence of the Spirit of God to apply it. And without this, the gospel of salvation may be preached to sin-

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ners from year to year, and they still continue in their natural miserable state.

'Tis the Spirit's work to bring finners to a fight and fense of their fin and misery, and to discover Christ to them as their only remedy; to convince them that they are loft without him, and by bowing their wills, effectually perfuade them to close with him. But tho' the errand on which he comes deserves the readiest entertainment, he finds the strongest opposition made

against him.

Hence his work is expressed by striving, and every foul he gains, is by conquest; and in order to it, how many strong holds of Satan are to be pulled down? What a stone does he find in the hearts of all, that nothing short of an Almighty Power can break? How great are the refistances made to his grace, if possible, to render his attempts frustrate? And what an exceeding greatness of power is put forth where all these are subdued, and salvation is brought home to the fouls that thrust it away? How fcarcely are they faved to whose fafety fuch a power is necessary?

(3.) The falvation of the righteous may be faid to be difficult, as to the course they are to

take to make it fure.

(1.) This is denoted by the phrases which the scriptures use, when speaking of the way to falvation, and the hard exercises required of those that walk in it : fuch as a race, a fight, striving, wrestling, labouring, watching, giving all diligence; terms the most opposite to coldness and floth, and which imply a necessity of engaging all

all our might, as what there will be occasion for.

(2.) What multitudes give out and draw back, after some faint attempts in the business of salvation, as not willing to be at the pains it requires? Thus, many are said to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and shall not be able, as not

striving to the degree necessary.

(3.) 'Tis fadly proved to be difficult from this, that so few are saved, in comparison of the numbers that perish. As a proof of this, consider the reason given by our Lord, when exhorting his hearers to enter into the strait gate: For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it, Matt. vii. 13, 14. The salvation of the righteous is difficultly obtained.

3. Let us see from whence the difficulty proceeds, and you may take a prospect of this, from three things, viz. from what one that would be saved, is called to do, from the impersect state he is in, and from the hindrance and op-

position he meets with.

1. We may see the difficulty of the salvation of the righteous, from what one that would be

faved, is called to do.

The righteous man who is entered by the strait gate of regeneration, into the narrow way that leads to life, is not to sit down as if all his work was over. He is indeed, by being partaker of the divine nature, initially prepared for heaven; but while abiding here on earth upon

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his trial, how much has he to do in his way to it? The commandment of God, is exceeding broad, and by this the Christian is to walk. The grace that bringeth falvation, teacheth him to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that bleffed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 11-14. When he that wears the character of a righteous man, hath done his best; upon a review, how far short does he find he has come? What room and work for repentance, by which his foul is to be melted and humbled before God for his daily fins? And how the just is to live by faith; but how weak and low is that often found? And for a wounded spirit, pressed down under the burden and fense of fin, to look to a crucified Jesus, with hope thro' his merits and interceffion to obtain mercy and find grace in the eyes of a just and holy God, is far from being an eafy thing.

'Tis easy indeed for a stupid sinner to dream of a pardon, while conscience is asleep: but when this is once awakened, how difficult to bring his soul to believe he hath obtained it? How scarcely and difficultly, upon this account are the righteous saved? And the more so, as they are to bring forth the fruits of faith and repentance, and to abound in them. To renounce the world, and crucify the sless with its affections and lusts; to cut off right hands,

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and pluck out right eyes; to take up their cross and follow their Lord, and be faithful to him even to the death, in expectation of a kingdom that they never faw. The very mention of fuch things, speaks the difficulty wherewith the righ-

teous get fafe to glory.

2. The difficulty of the falvation of the righteous is obvious, from the imperfect state he is in while on earth. The righteous man is but fanctified in part; and through remaining corruption, is so defective in duty, and so frequently falls into fin, that should God be strict to mark iniquity, O Lord, as the Pfalmist cries, who could stand? Indeed, so far as he is renewed, and grace still prevails, there is a delight in the law of God after the inward man, and God's commands are not grievous. And was he made perfect like the angels, to do the will of God, would be no more difficult to him, than it is to them: but that would be to suppose him to have obtained falvation, which as yet he finds himself far short of. While he is in this world, he is taking his painful steps, and frequently falling and rifing again, with a great burden on his back, and tears in his eyes, and concern in his heart, and is thus labouring his way towards perfection and falvation.

3. The righteous is scarcely, that is with difficulty, faved; as is plain from the hindrances and opposition he meets with, from his own

corruption, the world, and the devil.

1. From his own corruption. 'Tis the power and reign of fin, that makes it so hard to bring any into the way of falvation at first; and 'tis R 4 owing

owing to the being and workings of this, that they that are at once recovered, are so fcarcely faved. And where is the faint that feels not reason heartily to join in the Apostle's cry, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! He would fain be holy as God is holy, and is panting and striving after it; but finds a law, that when he would

do good, evil is present, Rom. vii. 21.

Tho' fin is dethroned, 'tis not totally cast out: for by its close adherence, and constant working, Saints feel better than any words can tell them, how much they fuffer from an enemy This binds their hands, and clogs their endeavours, fo that they cannot serve God, as they would; but too often offend him, to the grieving his Spirit; and their lofing the light of his countenance, and thereby their own peace. And when the heirs of heaven are left to walk in darkness, and filled with the fears of hell, and fometimes, as it were, shaken over it, well may they be faid to be scarcely saved.

2. An evil world increases a Saint's difficulty in his way to glory. This, faith the Apostle, is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John v. 4. But how forely are they put to it, and how difficult do they find it, to pass fafely thro' it, and get to heaven out of it? The cares of the world engage their time and thoughts, and too much take them off from minding their great concerns. The good things of the world, in too great a degree, draw off their hearts from God, and the better country. evil things of the world too much depress and fink

fink their spirits, or beget too great fear of what they may suffer in, or from it: and so make them drive heavily on in their christian course. The reproaches and scorn cast upon such as will not do as the most, but set themselves in good earnest to work out their salvation, is a trial that needs a great deal of grace to come off tonquerors in.

3. The Devil is the Saints grand adverfary, who continually walks about, as a roaring lion, feeking whom he may devour: and to escape his wiles, and repel his darts, requires the utmost vigilance and care. The righteous indeed shall hold on his way, and not come short of heaven in the end; but his unfeen enemy will give him all the disturbance possible, to render his progress hard and uncomfortable. In order to this he has numberless devices and temptations, and knows when, and how to use them with the greatest prospect of success. This makes it dangerous at any time to let down our watch; and to be always watching is no easy thing. And as he will thus purfue the christian to his last breath, with what difficulty, upon this account, may the righteous be faid to be faved?

And if this be the case of the righteous, what but perdition can be the portion of the wicked? this is the inference in the text: and how awful soever it is, the manner of the Apostle's speaking of it, adds to its horror. He puts it by way of interrogation, intimating that the misery that awaits the ungodly, especially those that perish under the gospel, will be such as no words can describe or reach. If the righteous

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scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

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dreadful mifery that awaits the ungodly.

To make way for this, we need only inquire, what time those words refer to, when the case of the wicked will be so sad, as to give occasion to say, Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? as denoting the afflictive extremity to which they shall be reduced, the insupportable shame with which they shall be fill'd, and the inevitable and utter destruction they must expect. When will it be thus with them?

1. When conscience is awake under any publick calamities in this world. Such a time is spoken of, Luke xxi. 25, 26. When there shall be distress of nations upon earth, with perplexity: mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. What at such a time will the ungodly sinner do, who has nothing to comfort him upon earth, and when looking to heaven, finds God a terror to him; and no wonder, he being his enemy?

2. At death. They that have not regarded God in their lives, where, or how will they be able to appear, when they come to die? He will not fuffer them to stay any longer in this world. And O the dreadfulness, to be snatch'd

unready and unwilling into another!

3. At the day of judgment. Where then shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? With what confusion will they be fill'd? How much will they be asham'd and afraid to be seen? How vain

vain will it be to call to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, to cover their shame, or hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath is come, which none of his enemies shall be able to abide? Now they affront his person, oppose his reign, resist his spirit, scorn his servants: But what will they do at their meeting with their judge? What will they do, when he shall be revealed from beaven, in slaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?

And 'tis to this day that our thoughts are to be ultimately carried, wherein the mifery of the wicked will be unavoidable, and inexpreffibly great. Where then shall the ungodly and the finner appear? How will they look at the hearing of Christ pronounce the dreadful doom, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels? After fuch a sentence, where will they appear? Then heaven will be shut against them, and all hope cut off of being admitted: This earth will then be all in flames; and there remains no other place, but hell. And what a shriek will they give at their being cast into it, where their torment will be universal, extreme, uninterrupted, and never to end?

1. Universal. We read God is able to destroy both soul and body: and in hell both these shall feel the power of his anger, which here could not be fully known. The staming tongue will will proclaim the misery of the outward man, while the soul grieves inwardly under the lashes of conscience, and the gnawing of the worm that never dies.

2. 'Twill be most acute, extreme, and such as may be best called insufferable, and yet must be fuffered. The wrath of God, which the ungodly are to drink, will be poured out without mixture, raising their torment to a height not now to be fully conceived of; under the fense of which, it is faid once and again, that in outer darkness, there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, the figns of insupportable anguish and despair. It is said, they shall be tormented in the presence of the boly angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, Rev. xiv. 10. Jesus Christ the Lamb, will doom them to hell, as attended with the bleffed angels, and in their fight; which will add a sting to the torments they are condemn'd to fuffer, and make them rage the more under them.

3. Their torment will be uninterrupted, and without mitigation and respite. Tho' they toss and roll, it will be impossible to find an easy place in their bed of slames. The rich man in the parable is represented as begging a drop of water to cool his tongue: which how small soever, was absolutely deny'd him. As there is no abatement of the joys of heaven; so neither of the torments of hell. The wrath of God will, in no degree, nor for any moment, be taken off from the sinner. When in this case, if they seek and wish for death, it shall see from them; and if they would be glad to find

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a grave, it cannot be. Instead of the least relief, which way soever they turn their eyes or thoughts, they meet with fresh matter of an-

guish.

How tormenting will be the remembrance of what is past? Of the time they once had, and how foolishly they wasted it? Of the seasons of grace with which they were once favoured, but slighted, and out-stood? Ah! how vain and vanishing are all the pleasures of sin, the offers and promises of the world and Satan? And how pungent will it be, to be told in hell by conscience, This, O sinner, was all, and again to be told, this was all for which thou neglected so great salvation, and hast lost heaven and thy soul for ever.

How quick will be the sense of what they seel present in hell? And if they look forward, how finking will it be to consider, that no re-

medy is to be had, or hop'd for?

4. All this mifery is to continue for ever; for the wicked are doom'd, and shall go away into everlasting punishment, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. No tears can abate the raging flames, nor cries procure a release or deliverance: but the smoak of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Instead of inlarging on so awful a subject, let

me close with a few things by way of Use.

APPLICATION.

1. Is the world divided into righteous and wicked, godly and ungodly, whose ends are to be so different, the one saved, the other de-

stroyed, of what importance is the inquiry, to which fort do we belong? And how restless should we be, till by union to Christ, as being new creatures, wash'd in his blood, and renew'd by his Spirit, we have good hope that we are among those to whom this message from God belongs, say ye unto the righteous, it shall be well with him?

2. Shall the righteous be faved in the end? Then they need not faint by reason of the difficulties of the way. Their toils and trials are great, but not always to last; and not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to follow, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

3. Well may Christ be precious to all that believe: Their obligations to him are everlasting, as his death was the price of all that grace by which they are made righteous here, and shall

be faved at last.

4. Are the righteous fcarcely faved, faved in the way of striving thro' the strongest opposition, and the greatest difficulties? How sweet will it be in the promised land, to look back upon their trials and conflicts undergone in this wilderness? And after a thousand doubts and fears, lest they should miscarry, how relishing will be their happiness, when finding themselves in that presence of God, where there is sulness of joy, and drinking of those rivers of pleasure that flow at his right hand for evermore.

5. How plain is it, that the salvation of the righteous thro' all these struggles, takes its rife from grace, is conducted by it, and will, by all

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that are faved, be resolved into it? Every one born from heaven, and brought into the way of salvation, will and ought to say, by the grace of God I am what I am; and with the same humility will he receive his crown, crying, grace, grace, to the hand that put it on; not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory.

6. The wisdom of the righteous will, e'er long, be seen and acknowledged, in their chusing now the narrow way with all its difficulties, that leads to life: And the ungodly will be most forward to condemn their own folly, in acting a part now that will fill them with the greatest

confusion for ever.

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fe III 7. Lastly, The righteous have reason to love Christ's appearing, as their salvation will then be completed, to his glory and their eternal joy: but terrible will be his coming to the ungodly, as it will be to consign them to the misery, to which they would here chuse the way: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

SERMON XV.

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A Funeral SERMON on the Death of Mr. Andrews, and Mrs. Andrews his Wife.

JOB XXI. 23, 24, 25, 26.

One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at case and quiet.

His breasts are full of milk, and his

bones are moistened with marrow.

And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.

They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

ANY of us, but a few days fince, follow'd the body of our deceased friend, Mrs. Andrews to the grave; and within a week after, that of her husband, and saw them laid in the dust: the younger and more likely to live, first, the elder, afterwards. On such an occasion, your thoughts might have been carried to these words, seeing they were in so great a measure fulfill'd before your eyes.

Job is here discoursing of the fovereignty of God in his dealings with men, both while they live, and when they come to die. According to which, there is no judging of the states of any as to their future and eternal state, from external dispensations.

The words suppose the necessity of dying, to which all are subject: And with reference to

that awful change, observe these things.

I. The difference between one and another, as to the time and manner of their dying. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow: and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with

pleasure.

This holds true both of the righteous and the wicked (the two forts that divide the world) one, whatever he be as to his spiritual state, a child of God, or an enemy to him; a real Saint, or a difguifed Hypocrite: one of either rank, may die in his full strength, i. e. when most likely to live. And it may be, if we judge from external circumstances, one who has the greatest reason to desire to live, as being wholly at ease and quiet; easy as to his health and outward circumstances in this world, and free from disquietude, from any inward foreboding apprehenfions of death's fudden approach too; bis breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow: Expressions denoting the persons to be healthful and vigorous, of a good constitution, and promifing of life for many years; and yet in the midst of the views and hopes of this VOL. I.

this his long continuance in this world, death stops him by a sudden stroke, and the man, or woman, or both, tho' they expected to flav.

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are prefently removed into another.

Thus one dieth in his full strength, tho' in the highest degree of health, and feeling no previous decays of nature to give him fensible warning to prepare to be gone: On the contrary, another, and this, whether an heir of glory, or a vessel of wrath, dieth in the bitterness of his foul, and never eateth with pleasure, thro' pain and fickness. He may indeed taste a little of the comfort of life, to tempt him to stay in it; but feeling the trial of a dying body, increased by a wounded spirit, he may be rather more willing to remove from hence. One dies fuddenly, another flowly; one in the best state of health and strength, another when weakened and worn down by age or fickness. Some go gently and eafily away, fo that it can scarcely be perceived they are dying, till dead: Others thro' pain of body, and forrow of foul, are affecting instances, that death may come in such a season and shape, as to be the King of terrors, and to shew that 'tis an awful thing to die. This is the first thing in the text, the difference between one and another foremention'd, as to the time and manner of their dying, whether righteous or wicked.

II. We have the common lot in which all agree, when dead; They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

This is to be understood of the body or external part, not of the departed spirit. The body body lifeless and loathsome, is consigned to earth and worms: but how great a difference soever there may be in the way, as to the felicity of both, there is none in their ends and perfections, as to

either body or foul.

The strong and weak, the young and the old, and these whether saints or sinners, are either removed by a lingring fickness, or a sudden stroke, by which they may go away in a fenfeless and easy manner, for any thing we know. But by these various ways they all shall meet in the grave, for a time, in their bodies; each falling back to the earth from whence they were originally taken. They shall lie down alike in the dust; and when they are there, the worms will make no distinction between one and another, but feize upon all as their prey. With whatever pomp some may be carried to the grave, the house appointed for all living, being once lodged there, they must fay to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my fifter, Job xvii. 14.

From the whole, three Observations may be

made, viz.

I. No advantages that distinguish any of the living, one from another, can guard any of them

from the stroke of death.

II. As there are various ways of dying, so both saints and sinners may be taken hence by any of them; either suddenly, or slowly; in a gentle manner with ease and quiet comparatively, or in sore pains of body, and distress and bitterness of soul.

III. Whatever difference there was among any, when living or dying, as to the body, 'tis not to

be discerned in the grave. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

God grant I may speak, and you hear of such truths as these, not as little or foreign matters; but as things of the last importance, in which we are all nearly concerned.

I. No advantages that distinguish any of the living, one from another, can guard any of them

from the stroke of death.

Under this, all I need to do, is,

I. To mention fome of the advantages that distinguish the living from one another, with the evidence that none of these can guard them against the stroke of death.

II. Whence it is that no advantages of life

can fecure from dying.

I. The text directs us to take notice of the advantages that diftinguish the living from one another, which nevertheless leave them equally

open and subject to the stroke of death.

1. Health and strength are great advantages, by which fome of the living are highly favour'd above others; but yet they have no reason from hence to be fecure, or hold death at defiance; feeing the vigorous are often cut off by a fudden irrefistible blow. One dieth in his full strength, when a diffolution feemed the farthest off, and might be least expected. An affecting instance, that there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the Spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war, Eccles. viii. 8. The strongest earthly tabernacle will not last alway, and may be sooner blown

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blown down by a violent storm, than one that to appearance was more feeble and tottering.

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What numbers have we seen, in the prime of their youth and vigour, brought down to the grave, whilft others have drawn out a dying life through the course of many years; though often brought fo low, that in the account of themselves and others, every day was like to be their last?

The Lord killeth, as well as maketh alive, bringeth down to the grave, as well as bringeth up: And when death comes armed with his power to execute his pleasure, how infignificant are the efforts of the strongest against its assaults?

How well foever men are prepared by an happy or vigorous constitution to oppose death's approach, how foon, through the utmost refistance, will it make its way to the heart, and lay the floutest breathless at its feet? Our strength may support us, and bear us up under some of the troubles of life, or may struggle for a while with pains and diseases, that are the forerunners of death; but when this potent conqueror comes to a close conflict, by commission from above, what heart can long endure, or what hands be strong? One dieth in his full strength, and as foon and fuddenly, as one that has been pineing away all his days.

Every man in his best estate is altogether vanity. They who by reason of strength, have held on to fourscore years, their strength is labour and forrow; for it is foon cut off, and they flee

away, Pfal. xc. 10.

2. Wealth and riches, and the weight and in-

fluence that ordinarily attend them, make a difference among the living; but they leave the owners as liable as the meanest, to be snatched away by death. The rich man in the gospel pleased himself with the prospect of a long continuance to enjoy his abundance, and resolved thus to sing to his soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry; but God said unto him, thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee. And all his wealth put together, could not set death at a greater distance, or procure one hour's longer stay. Luke xii. 19, 20.

As he that is in his full strength dieth, so also one that is wholly at ease and quiet. He dieth that is in as good a case to live, as any outward advantage from condition or circumstances could make way for him to do so. Such a one may be easy for a time; but how soon may that time be at an end? and then he be a sad witness of the insufficiency of all the wealth in the world to bribe death, or stay its hand, when it is sent to give the killing blow.

When God resolves to take away any with a stroke, a great ransom cannot deliver. Riches will be in vain offered to one that esteems them not, whether gold, or any thing that may be more precious. We read indeed that money answers all things, that is, the most necessitous occasions of the present life, Eccles. x. 19. But that none may think themselves ever the safer from dying, it is said, Riches profit not at the day of wrath. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their rich-

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es, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should live for ever, and not see corruption. We cannot bribe death for others, nor ourselves, that we or they should escape and not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the

dust, Pfal. xlix. 6, 7.

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Life, when going, cannot be staid, and when it is gone, it cannot be recalled by any worldly price that can be offered. God doth not value it, and death will not regard it, so as to respite the execution, either as to ourselves, or any dear to us. How profitable soever wealth is in other cases, 'tis vain and useless in our last moments. Whatever accommodations it may procure for us in this world, it can't save us from going out of it. This is the thing that makes multitudes unwilling to die, but can't save any from dying.

3. Wisdom, and holiness, which is the greatest wisdom, make the great difference among the living; but will not exempt the most eminent in these from dying, any more than others. to whom no fuch excellency belongs. Pfal. xlix. 10. We see that wife men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perisheth. How useful soever they may be to themselves, or others, while they live, they have no way to escape the common lot, but must go hence by dying. righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. xii. 26. But notwithstanding, they must die with them, and return to the same earth. When we read that righteousness delivereth from death, Prov. xi. 4. that is to be underflood 5 4

stood from the power of the second death, not from the stroke of the first.

Being born from heaven, their company on earth is the most useful and desirable; but they are not always to stay here. How ardent so-ever the prayers of their friends may be, who know their worth, and would fain keep them here, none of these will prevail when their hour is come. Death regards not the worth of those to whom it is sent, nor the entreaties of those who know not how to give them up. We may be ready to sorrow for them, and to lament our loss; but this will not stop them, and help us. The king of terrors is deaf to all cries, and will not be moved, even by tears.

Precious in the fight of the Lord is the death of his faints; but nevertheless, they die as well as others. Their death is a loss to our world, and so we have reason to follow them with lamentation to the grave, and to pour our tears after them; but we see death spares not the righteous any more than the wicked; the grave swallows

up both, without diffinction.

This being a matter of fact, not to be denied.

II. We may be led to inquire, whence it is that none of the advantages mentioned, that make a distinction among the living, can secure any of them from dying, not even the best of them.

1. This is to be traced up to the sentence of God, deserved by sin, and passed upon man upon his falling into it.

This was the fanction of the primitive law, Gen. ii. 17. In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die.

Man

Man venturing to fin by doing what he was forbidden, the threatning passed into a sentence against him, and was expresly pronounced by God himself upon him, Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. And as all mankind were in their first parent Adam, as their natural and covenant head, we are all of us hence involved in his fin and doom. Rom. v. 12. By one man fin entered into the world, and death by fin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all bave finned. To this the Apostle refers, Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed unto men once to die. And to shew God means as he speaks, the appointment is firmly kept to, and the awful fentence is daily executing and taking place. God has found a ranfom to deliver the believing foul from going down into the infernal pit; but the grave still stands open, in which the body is to be laid up, as the house appointed for all the living. This is the way of all the earth, by the order of heaven, and the fettlement of our fovereign Lord and lawgiver, in whose hand our life and breath is.

Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth? Job vii. 1. There is, and God hath fixed it. Job xiv. 5. His days are determined, and the number of his months are with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Hereupon, it may well be asked, What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the grave? How vain would it be to expect it, in opposition to the divine appointment? In pursuit of this, the grave is opening its mouth, and swallowing up one generation

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neration after another. Our fathers where are they? Adam, and the inhabitants of the old world, and all that have gone before us in them? Are they not all in their graves? And as there is no day in which some or other is not taken away; so every man living draweth after them, as there were innumerable before them. The living know that they must die: All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again, Ecclesiastes iii. 20.

2. Every man has fin, the cause of death, in him; and therefore, whatever else may be said of him while living, as sinful, he and all others are tending towards the grave. We are shapen in iniquity, conceived and born in sin; and they that are renewed and born again, are not intirely free from indwelling corruption, nor will, till the earthly tabernacle be taken down. Even in such as are Christ's, the body is dead because of sin.

No doubt, God could free his servants from all sin, by his sanctifying Spirit, without a dissolution: but in this method of doing it, his wisdom is eminently displayed; that as it was sin that let death into the world, even so death shall be the means by which it shall be totally and

effectually killed and cured.

3. All bring the feeds of death with them into the world, in the jarring elements that enter into their composition, and so are naturally and continually working towards a dissolution, and will sooner or later draw it upon them. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, not only corrupt, but a frail and feeble perishing thing.

We know, or may know, that in our best state, our earthly houses of these tabernacles, can't always last. All sless is grass, and all the glory of man as the slower of the grass; the grass withereth, and the slower thereof fadeth away. It will do so of itself, from a principle of corruption. Besides there are many blasts which it is liable to, that may decay it much sooner: and there is the hand of violence too, by which it may be suddenly cropt off. How slourishing soever it may appear in the morning, in the evening it may be cut down and withered, Psalm xc. 6.

In this fense, man is dying daily; and within a little while will have reason to say with Job, My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the grave is ready for me. Thus all the living, from him that is in his full strength, to him that is most weak and languishing, is subject to the

stroke of death.

So much for the first Observation.

II. We observed, That as there are various ways of dying, so saints and sinners may be taken hence by any of them; either suddenly, or slowly; in a gentle manner with ease and quiet comparatively, or in sore pains of body, and distress and bitterness of soul.

I shall only take notice at present of two of

these ways, viz.

I. Of dying fuddenly.

II. Of dying in bitterness of soul.

Both these ways the children of God may be taken hence, as well as such as are strangers and enemies to him.

I. One

I. One dieth in full strength, i. e. without long warning, or tedious wasting diseases and decays: Oftentimes when little expected, and in circumstances that prevent their taking a solemn farewel, either of their friends, or the friends of them, thro' the haste in which they are carried away.

How unsearchable are God's judgments, and how much are his ways past finding out? But as he does all things according to the counsel of his own will, let us humbly adore his sovereignty, and set ourselves to learn what he instructs us

in by his awful strokes: Namely,

First, Not to judge of God's special love or hatred by external providences; we being expresly told, that all things happen alike to all, and that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.

Secondly, That holy fouls may be hastily snatched to heaven, to prevent the prayers of his people for their longer stay, after their work

is done and their time come.

Thirdly, That faints may be called haftily away in tenderness and compassion to themselves; particularly to save them from the trial of long and grievous sickness and pain, under which 'tis so hard to bear up and maintain a becoming temper and frame; that they may not have their souls wounded by the affectionate tears of their friends, who may be loth to give them up, and yet from whom they must be gone; and that there may be no room for the buffetings of Satan, &c. O the mercy, to be carried to heaven, where he can never come, and that in so

fwift a manner, as to have little disturbance in the passage. May my house and soul be in order, and then the sooner it quits this vile body, and leaves this wretched world, if in the twinkling of an eye, so much the better. But we must not be our own chusers; and to be sure, God will dispose all things in the best manner for them that are his.

fourthly, God may remove fome of his children hastily to heaven, for the instruction of survivers, that that they may do and get what good they can by them while they live, not knowing whether any time or capacity shall be allowed for this when they come to die.

Fifthly, Moreover, this is a sensible evidence of the frailty of our own lives, and that we have no reason to conclude upon many years to come, when some of our friends are removed in a few

days, hours, or minutes.

Sixtbly, Here is a loud call to redeem our time, and be continually upon our watch, as not knowing when our Lord will come by death, and summon us away. Blessed is that servant, who when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing.

For fuch purposes as these, some that are dear

to God may die fuddenly.

II. As some die in their full strength, so others

may die in the bitterness of their souls.

This is no new or unaccountable thing; one of inward distress has been often the case of the best of God's saints, in the time of their lives. How affecting is the complaint of Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. 3—9. I remembred God, and was troubled:

bled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Then hold my eyes waking: I am fo troubled that I cannot speak. And will the Lord cast off for ever? And will be be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth bis promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? What desponding language is this, expressive of inward darkness and distress, and yet uttered by an eminent faint? Heman was another of the number, and yet what complaints daily doth he fend forth, Pfalm lxxxviii. 14, 15, 16. Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I fuffer thy terror, I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off. And thus it was more than once with David, a man after God's own heart, Pfal. xiii. 1, &c. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, how long wilt thou bide thy face from me? And Pfal. lxxxix. 46. How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Job is in the same strain, Chap. xiii. 24, 25, 26. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? For thou writest bitter things against me. So Chap. xix. 6 to the 8. Know now that God bath overthrown me. He bath set darkness in my paths. He bath kindled his wrath against me, and counteth me as one of his enemies. This is the language of one, who then had none like him for holiness in all the earth, Job ii. 3. But let us enquire from whence

whence it may proceed on their part, that such as belong to God, may be under inward distresses at their deaths; and also why their heavenly sather is pleased to permit it to be thus with them. Some die in the bitterness of their souls, and as being within view of eternity, and seeling their souls a going to God to be determined for an everlasting state, may be deeply afflicted: The reasons of which may arise, on their part,

from fuch things as these, viz.

1. From their having commonly fet death at too great a distance from them, and their too much pleafing themselves beforehand with the hopes of a longer stay on earth, than God defigned them. 2. From death's finding them in the dark as to their title to the life to come, and their meetness of it. And how sad is it to think of going out of this world, when we have no evidence of a better? 3. Conscience in the faints last moments may be more than usually awakened to revive the sense of past sins. 4. Satan fometimes is permitted to come in, and to make the trial the more grievous. As believers are going out of his dominion, he will, as far as permitted, make them feel his malice. He knows he cannot follow them to heaven; and therefore will endeavour to fend them mourning thither. Lastly, God may withdraw the light of his countenance, and how deplorable a cafe must the foul then be in? What wonder if, without speedy relief, the man dies in the bitterness of bis foul? *

[•] See Sermon VI. p. 98, 99, 100.

But this leads us to the fecond part of this inquiry, viz. Whence it is that God may leave any of his children to go out of the world in the bitterness of their souls? and if we should resolve it into his adorable sovereignty, it might silence all objections. Shall any teach God knowledge, seeing be judgeth those on high? If it were only to shew his dominion over his creatures; particularly his new creatures, whom he hath formed for his praise, Who could deny him the liberty of glorifying himself his own way?

But farther, to justify God's dealings herein, feveral reasons may be collected from his word and declared will, why God may suffer such as are dear to him to die under a cloud, and in the

bitterness of their souls? He may do it,

1. To teach them not always to expect that comfort that he hath not absolutely promised, but to be more solicitous for grace, which may and shall remain where once he hath bestowed it, tho' peace be deny'd or withdrawn. Grace is necessary to the being of a christian; and this being secure by promise and covenant, is matter of thankfulness; tho' comfort, an arbitrary vouchsasement belonging to a christian's wellbeing, may be withheld.

2. God may do it, to lead them to make a thorow fearch of their hearts, and to put them upon a more vigorous mortification of fin, which itin ay be, has been neglected, to the weakening of their graces, and hindering them of

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comfort.

3. In this way, God, perhaps, would engage his people to live a life of faith to the last, in the

the want of fenfible comfort, and to resolve with Job, that tho' he slay them, they will trust in him.

4. This way God will eminently baffle Satan, the accuser of the brethren, by giving them opportunity to shew their resolved adherence to him, whatever difficulty or discouragement is thrown in their way.

5. God orders it thus for the trial of his people's fincerity in the choice of him as their portion, and in their love and devotedness to

him as fuch.

VOL. I.

Lastly, In such a dispensation, God makes a difference between earth and heaven. Here the heirs of the kingdom go forth mourning, but shall at length come to mount Sion with everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall slee away.

There is another Observation behind, viz.

III. That whatever difference there was among any, while living or dying, as to the body, 'tis not to be discerned in the grave. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Holy flesh must see corruption, and the spirits of the just get the start of their bodies, and be made persect above, while the other half of themselves is laid and lest for a long time in the dust. This is an affecting dispensation; and it may seem strange that the bodies of such as belong to Christ, should be treated (for what appears) as the bodies of his enemies, i. e. should be laid in the grave, a prey for worms, while the departed spirit is present with the Lord, in the heavenly glory, and a companion for angels.

If we look only to one fide of the matter, we may be apt to wonder that it is not otherwise;

confidering,

1. That the bodies of believers are ranfom'd by Christ, as well as their souls. He shed his blood for both, and laid down his life for both. And God the Father hath declared himself well pleased in him, and with believers for his sake, as having made compleat satisfaction by dying a propitiation for sin. Hereupon is the soul Christ's own, as bought with a price; and so is the body too. Is heaven purchased and prepared for the soul, and promised to it? 'tis evident too in that Christ hath taken our nature intire thither, the body was not design'd to be excluded. Heaven is the inheritance of the saints, as supposed complete.

Again, the bodies of believers are related to Christ as well as their souls; and so are dear to him, and beloved by him. Whence then is it that they should be so differently treated, the one buried, the other gloristed; the grave made the mansion of the one, and heaven the habitation of the other? not because that they shall not be

brought together again, we may be fure.

Moreover, the bodies of believers were here fanctified by the Holy Spirit, as well as their fouls; and in every faint as made up of foul as well as body, the Holy Spirit is faid to dwell, as in his temple: and how fad does it feem that any part of his temple should be faid to lie in ruins?

Farther, Enoch and Elias are, body and foul in heaven, which shews what the rest are capable

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Lastly, The happiness of the saints will be then most compleat, when their bodies shall be united to their persected spirits; upon which their praises shall be raised to the highest pitch: And if for these ends they are to be brought to heaven at last, how wonderful is it that they should be so long detain'd in dust and darkness? But notwithstanding the seeming difficulties of such a dispensation: as God has pitch'd upon it, we may be affured, it is the wisest and best. He herein acts upon reasons worthy of himself, of which what we know not now, we shall know afterward: but enough may be discovered at present, to shew the wisdom of his conduct therein.

God's friends and favourites: but as heaven is what they had forfeited by fin, their way to it is to be through death and the grave. God testifieth his love to them in receiving their fouls to glory; but it is fit he should shew his aversion to fin, in ordering the body to remain for a time in the grave. And instead of murmuring that both parts are not presently happy, we have great reason to wonder that either of them is brought to it.

Again, 2. Saints are to go to heaven, as what Christ hath purchased for them: but 'tis not to be forgotten, that 'tis nevertheless a free gift to them; and therefore they are to go thither by dying, that is, their souls first, whilst the body is left behind a while, to tell them that 'tis what

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they are beholden to free grace for, in whatever

way bestowed upon them.

Heaven is purchased for them: but the price whereby it was so, was of God's providing, not theirs. And as the price was of God's providing, he has reserved to himself the liberty of bringing his people to it, in a way that will best set off the freeness of his grace, and keep up a conviction that eternal life is still his gist: and such a design is visibly served, by making death and the grave the common and stated way to glory. Though God be well pleased with Christ, and with believers in and thro' him, he will shew it in a way that shall most conduce to the praise of the glory of his grace.

3. The primitive threatning that fixed a connexion between fin and death, has been confirmed both under the Old Testament, and the New, and so made unalterable; and they that have lived under both, have been sufficiently told what to expect. 'Tis pronounced, Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return. And it is repeated, Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed unto Men once to die. And as God has seen sit thus to declare it, for the honour of his truth,

he will fulfil it.

4. Even the best of God's children have so in them whilst they live; and death is the way in which they shall be freed perfectly from a Thus God brings good out of evil, and make that which seems to destroy us, to do more so us, than our prayers and tears and best friends upon earth could ever do, even to free us from an, our greatest burden.

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5. Christ went to heaven thro' death and the grave: and it need not seem strange that his members are to follow him the same way. Do believers die? let no complaint be heard; 'tis no more than Christ hath done before them.

6. Christ's power and faithfulness are more eminently to be displayed in the refurrection of his fervants at the last day: and this their going down to the grave, and continuing fo long there, is to make way for. How mighty a faviour will he appear, when he shall so change our vile bodies, putrified and turned to corruption, that they shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body; according to the powerful working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself? He will come to be glorified in his faints, and admired in all them that believe. And this shows us how he shall be so: bodies sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory. He shall be admired in his faithfulness to the trust committed to him by his Father, and in fulfilling his own words spoken to his Father in the hearing of his followers, viz. That of all which he had given him, he should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day, John vi. 39. And how abundantly should believers be fatisfied in feeing their falvation brought about in that way by which their Lord is glorified?

7. The translation of *Enoch* and *Elias* may confirm the christian's faith, that their bodies shall be brought to glory, tho' for the present, they are laid low in the dust.

There are just reasons why soul and body should be parted: but however, tho' their bo-

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dies are confined in the grave for a time, they shall not be lost. Enoch and Elias are in glory with their bodies: And they have no reason to think they are designed to be singular instances; but that in the appointed season, all the children of the kingdom of glory shall be brought entire into it, as well as they.

Lastly, Upon the bodies awaking at the refurrection, the shadow of death shall be turn'd into the morning. And how many soever were the days of darkness in which they lay in the grave, all will be forgotten, and seem as nothing; there being an eternity still before them of light and glory, to be enjoyed in heaven.

APPLICATION.

1. Will no advantages that diffinguish the living one from another, save any from the stroke of death? Then how little reason have we to envy others, or value ourselves upon any temporal advantage, that can't keep us from dying and being laid in the grave, and from worm and corruption there?

The sparkling eye must then be closed; the lovely colour turned into a ghastly hue; the most curious complexion marred, and the best face in the world eaten in pieces by worms, and so moulder into dust. The most costly or gaudy attire must be exchanged for a winding-sheet, the habit in which we are to go to our long home.

And as for wealth and riches, we must bid adieu to them at the entrance of death. The rich and honourable when he dieth, shall carry nothing away with him, his glory shall not descend

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fcend after him, Pfal. xlix. 16, 17. How fenseless is the pride of vain minds, in looking down with disdain upon their fellow creatures, upon the account of their having a little more of money, or honour, or cloaths, or beauty than others, whilst together upon earth; when they are going to lie down alike in the dust, and there to be alike covered with worms, and eaten up?

2. How great a change is made by dying! and how diligently should we prepare and wait for it, by securing an interest in Christ, and clearing it up, and carrying it as persons waiting for their Lord.

3. Whilst the righteous as well as the wicked may go hence, either suddenly, or in the tedious bitterness of their souls, let what hath been said, confirm their saith as to a suture state, that there will be made a real and wide difference among men in it; tho' at their going away from this world, the natural life of both saints and sinners might, to appearance, be much alike.

The faint dies reconciled to God and at peace with him: the finner dies in a state of enmity to God, and hath him, the Most High, an enemy to him. The one dies pardoned through the blood of Jesus, and so freed from condemnation and the power of the second death: the other dies under the guilt of all the sins that ever he committed, which sink him down to the place of torment. The one goes hence partaker of the divine nature, as born from heaven, and made meet to be partaker of that inheritance of God's children: the other dies alienated from

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the life of God, and a veffel of wrath fitted for destruction.

The one dies interested in Christ, and so beloved of God, and intitled to heaven: the other without any part or lot in the only Saviour, and so has nothing to expect but to be bid lie down in forrow.

The one dies out of the world where he neither had, nor expected his happiness, and goes into that where his treasure is laid up: the other dies out of the world that hath his heart, and which he took up with as his portion, and goes not into any other state where he could possibly

lay up any comfortable provision.

The one dies under the bond of the covenant, and under the comfort of the infallible promife, that it shall go well with him: but the other dies under the sentence of a broken law, with his guilt aggravated, from his having despited the remedying grace offered him under the Gospel, and so lies liable to all that is dreadful to be expected.

The one goes to the grave as a mere prisoner without hope: the other goes to it as to a bed of rest, in hope of a blessed resurrection, and awaking refreshed and satisfied with God's like-

ness.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

SERMON XVI.

PSALM XVII. 14.

--- From men of the world, which have their portion in this life.

HIS Psalm, according to the title of it, is a Prayer of David. It is made up of several petitions, mixed with arguments to strengthen his faith, while he was looking up to God for a gracious answer.

In the foregoing verse, he begs that his foul

may be delivered from the wicked.

Two things we may conceive him to have meant by this. 1. That it was his defire that he might not fall under their power: against which danger, for his own comfort, he considers them, as God's fword, and his hand; and so as under his dominion, and as unable to move and do the least thing without him. 2. That it was his desire also, that he might never be any of their number: the ground of which is laid down in the Text, where they are described by a character expressive of their misery, viz. as men of the world, which have their portion in this life, i. e. all the good they have and are to enjoy for ever. Let me never, intimates he,

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have my lot with the men who have their portion in this empty life, such a one is confined to it, and bounded by it; and which, when this life is spent, this world, their portion, and it, must be left together. This he deprecates as a case most deplorable and wretched, and herein speaks the sense of the whole generation that are seekers of God.

Observation. How large soever may be the portion of the wicked in the enjoyment of the present life, their condition is miserable in itself, and in the saints account of it too, if they have this portion only, for their all.

Here we may confider,

I. That even wicked men may have a large portion in the present life.

II. That living and dying, what they have

here, is their all.

III. Upon what accounts the condition of

fuch may be faid to be miferable.

IV. Whence it is that faints reckon it to be fo, and beg to be delivered from the miserable number of such as they are.

V. The Use of the whole.

I. Even wicked men may have a large por-

tion in the present life.

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We read of the ungodly, who prosper in the world, increase in riches, and have more than heart can wish, Psal. lxxiii. 3, &c. The rich man in the gospel, how unmindful soever he was of God and his soul, is said to be clothed in purple and fine linnen, and to fare deliciously every day; and yet after all be went to bell, where Abraham had him remember, that he in his lifetime

time bad bis good things. What served to gratify and please his appetite and senses, were his good things, and what he chose and preferred before all other, and placed his felicity in, and used as he pleased, as if there was no lord above him.

This he is bid in the parable to remember when in hell, that in his life time upon earth, he had his good things; as many others may have, and after all, find their temporary happi-

ness to end in eternal torment.

If you inquire into the reasons of this, they

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1. Wicked men may be thus indulged as the creatures of God, to prove the extent and kindness of his providence. The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works, Pfal. cxlv. 9.

While they carry an heart disaffected to him, the wicked live as without God in the world, and lift up their heels against him, him that made them, and not only preferves, but often

abundantly provides for them.

The whole world liveth on God's bounty, as the great Creator and Lord of all; tho' he has laid up a bleffed inheritance for such as are his sons. The offspring of his power only, who may come short of his saving grace and heaven, may have their houses and bellies filled with his hidden treasures during their stay upon this earth.

2. Even wicked men may have a large share of the present world, to let it be seen that judgment is God's strange work, and how disingenuous a part those act, who while loaded with his benefits.

benefits, go on in rebellion against him, instead of being led by his goodness to repentance.

Sometimes indeed the wrath of God is revealed more speedily from heaven against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, to tell the world by fearful instances, that whosoever they are that make a mock of fin, God hates them. God spares any profligate sinners, he doth it, not to shew that he approves of them at all; but only to shew, that instead of dealing with them presently as their iniquities deserve, by stripping them of all outward comforts, or striking them presently dead, his patience giveth them a longer day and trial for their amendment. God doeth them good, and giveth them rain from heaven, and fruitful feafons, filling their hearts with food and gladness; thereby to lead them to good thoughts of him, and more powerfully to allure and encourage their return to him: And if this end is not answered, but they after all despise the riches of his goodness, and after their hardness and impenitent heart, go on treafuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Wo is justly due unto them, as their own consciences may testify.

3. Wicked men, in the hand of providence, may do some services for God or his people, which God will testify his regard to, by what he gives them of the things of the present world

for their reward.

Thus Nebuchadnezzar had a grant of the land of Egypt, in confideration of what he did in the cause of God against Tyre, Ezek. xxix. 18,

19, 20. Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus, &c. Yet hath he no wages, nor his army, &c. Therefore, behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, &c. because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.

What Jebu did for the Lord of Hosts, materially good, tho' from a pretended zeal, is recompensed with a kingdom lasting for four Generations, 2 Kings x. 30. Wicked Men, tho' they can do nothing savingly profitable to themselves; yet in some cases they may perform actions materially good, and materially useful to others, and be the cause of some good in the world. And tho' God deserveth their doing all this, and a great deal more and better at their hands, and is so much beforehand with them, that they can challenge nothing as their due, by way of requital; yet he is pleased to overpay them for their greater encouragement; and so leaves them no colour for clamour or complaint.

God hath his differing rewards for different persons: but to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life. And even men of the world, when they do any for him, as they look no farther than earth, in the good

things of it they receive their reward.

4. There be many that say, who will shew us any good? viz. any temporal good, in opposition to spiritual and eternal: and God gives wicked men their portion in this life, as what they covet and chuse, bidding them take it, and therein the all they shall have.

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Heaven and earth are set before them, seen things in hand, and unseen things in hope, and they are bid to chuse; and as they chuse this world, and the enjoyments of it, before all that God hath laid up for them that love him in heaven, they are answered according to their desire. God lets them have the portion they chuse; that because nothing else, as they think will fatisfy, they may take it, and try how far it will make them happy. Tho' they are warned of the folly of forsaking God, the fountain of living water, and cleaving to broken cisterns that can hold none; yet seeing they insist upon

it, providence grants them their wish.

When Ifrael were weary of the government of God, and would have a king like the rest of the nations, God ordered his prophet to tell them what they were to expect, and how much they would fuffer by the change of their prefent government: but instead of being disfluaded, they infifted upon their defire; and therefore God bids his fervant hearken to their voice, by letting them have their way and wish; that so when they had once felt the mifery of what they had foolishly desired, they might take it for their portion, thanking themselves only for it. And so it is here: men are told that vanity and vexation is the fum of all the world; that riches profit not in the day of wrath, nor can ever be to them equal to the favour of God: yet nevertheless, they will have them for their portion, and God yields to their request. And what will they get in the end? c. Wicked

the present life, in a way of judgment; their corruption abusing what they enjoy to encrease their guilt, and so to hasten and encrease their destruction? They that will be rich, God may in anger permit 'em to have their will. And how sad will be the event, when they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into divers soolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and a snare, and into divers soolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and a snare and and a snare and a solicion.

tion and perdition?

The infinitely wife God foresees how hurtful and mischievous these things will be to the eager pursuers, before they compass them; and therefore gives them not only many warnings in his word, but it may be, several checks in his providence: but seeing they will break thro', he at length, as an instance of his displeasure, lets them compass their desire, giving them their portion in this life, without his effectual grace, either for a due improvement of it, or to escape the temptation belonging to it; and then 'tis given in judgment indeed.

6. Wicked men may have their portion in this life for the instruction of the righteous: and this in several things that deserve their regard.

Paticularly,

(1.) In the deceitfulness and corruption of their hearts. How many when in lower circumstances, promise what good they will do, if ever they have it in their power? If they get such an estate, if ever they obtain so many scores or bundreds by the year, how readily they would testify their thankfulness to God, and their compassion to men, by what they would give to

pious and charitable uses! And it may be, within a few years, thro' fuccess in business, or some turn of providence, they are raised to the condition they defired to be in: but then, instead of honouring God with their substance, or contributing to the necessities of his poor, they have their minds more straitned than their circumstances are enlarged, and are more backward to what is good than before. And how plainly does this speak the deceitfulness of the heart? Again, when low, how many did feem virtuous, and it may be made a profession of religion, and wondered at the excess into which others ran, and expressed their purposes if they had an estate, that they would not spend it in making provision for the flesh, but improve their freedom from labour and trade, by fpending more time for God and their own fouls good? Well, it may have pleased God to try them with a portion in this life, and fince, instead of being better, or keeping within the bounds they did before, they have thrown off all reftraint, and abused their prosperity to draw forth the corruption that was before in their heart, tho' it lay concealed. God knows very well what is in man, but others do not; not the finner himself, till it is discovered by his having his portion given him in hand, in this life.

(2.) The large portion of the wicked in the things of this world, may tell the righteous, of how little value this is, in the account of God; in that these things are often given to his enemies plentifully, when denied in such a measure to his children. Now this can't be because

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he loves or favours his enemies most; but because these lower things, given them in what degree soever, are so mean in his account, as that his children may learn by his distribution of them, to regard them as he does, viz. as no part of their felicity, but as common favours to all his creatures, good or bad, enemies or friends.

(3.) The righteous may learn, that men of the world, while enemies to God, can't infer their interest in his special savour, from what they here enjoy; nor can the servants of God conclude themselves forgotten or hated, from what in worldly and external regards they are denied. These things are given with a promiscuous had; to prophane Esau, as well as upright Jacob: All things come alike to all. No man knoweth love, or hatred, by all that is before bim. Eccles. ix. 1, 2.

(4.) From the largest portion of this world given to the wicked, the righteous may be instructed in the certainty and transcendent greatness of what God has laid up for them in a better state. David had his believing thoughts working upon this, as matter of comfort to

him.

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He speaks of his enemies under this character, men that have their portion in this life: and, as certainly as they had so, he depended upon having his hereaster, when he should behold God's face in righteousness.

As the present sufferings of the righteous, may assure the wicked, that they are reserved for greater wrath; so the prosperity of the wicked U upon

upon earth, may affure the righteous of fomething higher and better, laid up for them in heaven.

Let none of Christ's little flock give way to fear. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, Luke xii. 32. Others may divide the kingdoms of this world; but shall inherit no part with them who are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jefus Christ, in the kingdom that shall endure forever.

(5.) Men of the world have their portion in this life, given them of God, and where the very children of God are required to be ready to do good to them, during their stay in it, that they may be brought more completely to imitate their Father who is in heaven. This is the argument our Lord uses. Matth. v. 44, 45. But I say unto you, love your enemies, &c. do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, &c.

So much for the first thing, That even wicked men have a large portion in the present life.

II. Living and dying, what the wicked have

here, is their all.

1. Their choice is confined to this world, and extends no farther; and they are to be dealt withal according to their choice. They look upon the good things of this world, as the best, as things fufficient to make them happy; and they chuse them accordingly: their souls take their ease and rest in them, and they look no farther. And as they take no care to provide for another life, it can't be expected they should have any portion there. The things of this world are their the the

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their good things; and receiving these, they receive their consolation. They would have their portion in hand, and they have it so.

2. According to their choice, their names are written in earth, as men that have nothing to

expect or enjoy beyond it.

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'Tis their doom and desert, as departing from God, and seeking that happiness in the earth which is to be found in God alone, Jer. xvii. 13. They that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have for saken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. They shall be written in the earth, where their names and claims shall soon be blotted out, as that which is written in the dust. They belong to the earth, and shall be numbered among those who lay up their treasure here; and then fix their hearts upon it, in opposition to those whose names are written in heaven, who upon their remove from hence shall have their portion there.

3. The wicked continuing such, are only sit for a portion in this life, and utterly unsit for a portion in heaven; as they can have no satisfaction or relish in the things which God hath laid up for them that love him. The things of earth suit their minds, please there senses, gratify their corrupt inclinations and affections; and as being altogether for earth, their unmeetness for heaven leaves them nothing to expect or en-

joy there.

4. Men of the world, living and dying such, go away under the charge of abusing the portion here committed to their trust, and shall never be try'd with any other. What they received

ceived from God on earth, should have been employed for him, to promote his glory, ferve his interest, and minister to the necessities of his faints: But instead of this, foolish sinners grow wanton under the dews of heaven; and while the father of mercies loads them with his benefits, those very mercies are turned against him, and made fuel to feed their corruptions. Tho they had nothing but what they received, they acted as if they were lords, and not accountable to God himself. They opposed his dominion, invaded his property, called the things received, their own, and perverted them to other ends than those for which they were bestowed; and having been unfaithful in what has been committed to them, what a wretched account must they give at the end of the present life, when they are to be stewards no longer?

5. Men of the world have their all upon earth, as being none of the children of God by faith in Christ, and so none of the heirs of God, for

whom a better inheritance is referved.

6. Men of the world having confined their defires to the present life, when this is over, instead of any thing farther to enjoy, they have nothing but misery to expect; and this the greater, according as the portion was, that they received and abused.

But this leads to the

IIId. General. Upon what accounts their condifion may be faid to be miserable, who have their portion only in this life. It is fo

1. As they hold their lives and portion by the most uncertain tenure, even the patience of

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God, which they continue to abuse, and so give place to justice to cut them off at pleasure.

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2. The condition of the wicked is miserable amidst the largest portion in the present world, as they have it without that love which God beareth to his own. And what comfort can it yield worthy of the name, to enjoy the world with the displeasure of God? What satisfaction can there be in corn, and wine, and oil, without the light of God's countenance? Pfal. iv. 7. 'Tis the love of God, and some good hope concerning it, that fweetens the least enjoyment; and so a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the largest possessions of the wicked. What the better is it, to have houses crammed with all precious stores, and bellies filled with hid treasures, and all the while to be open to the frowns of an angry God, whose loving kindness is better than life, and whose wrath is worse than death.

3. The condition of such as have their portion in the present life, is miserable indeed, as what they have, they have without Christ, without a part in him, and without any special relation to him: An interest in him, sweetens the heaviest cross, and the want of it lessens and leaves tasteless every comfort.

4. The condition of such as have their portion only in this life, may be said to be miserable, as they have no foundation for solid peace or comfort: and this not only upon account of the vanity of the creature, and the vexation that follows it: But,

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(1.) As they have it under the guilt of fin

unpardoned.

(2.) As amidst all their outward enjoyments of it, they are ever liable to the alarms of confcience, filling the foul with inward horror.

(3.) As they have it not only without the divine bleffing, but with a fecret curfe that goes along with it. How awful are those words which stand yet pointed against every wicked man, Deut. xxviii. 17, 18. Cursed shall be the basket and thy store: cursed shall be the fruit of thy land, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep? This curse appears sometimes, in the infensible decay of their portion, so that tho' they get money, 'tis put as into a bag with holes, from whence it runs out they know not how: fometimes in the blafting of the comfort of it, or in giving them no heart to make use of it, or fuch like judgments.

5. The condition of fuch as have, and choose to have their portion in the present life, is truly miserable; as the prosperity of fools (and such they really are) tends to their destruction. And it doth fo, as it leads them to forgetfulness of God and heaven, and fets them at a greater distance from both; as it ministers fuel to fin, and fo increases their guilt, and as it makes death more terrible thro' their lothness to leave the present world, and the accommodations of it

that invite their stay.

O death, how terrible art thou to the man that has his portion in this life, and nothing to expect or enjoy beyond it!

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6. Lastly, The condition of those that have their portion in this life, is miserable indeed; as when the enjoyment of it is over, the mifery that fucceeds will be the greater. They that once had a large portion in this life, and afterwards are stript of all, will have a quicker sense of the depriving change. 'Twill be dreadful for 'em to reflect, that all their pleasure is gone, and that the place in this world, in which they thought they had goods laid up for many years, must know them no more for ever. They will bitterly lament their folly, in taking up with fuch things for their portion, as at death must be left behind them, and do them no fervice in their greatest distress. And it will heighten their torment to reflect, that for fo forry a portion they neglected and loft heaven; nay, and fuffered themselves to be betrayed to an everlasting hell besides: from which the greatest portion they once had, cannot avail to ranfom their fouls, no nor to procure a drop of water to cool their tongues under the tormenting flames they endure there.

Thus the condition of those that have their portion in this life, is miserable.

IV. Whence is it that Saints reckon it to be

1. Because that so far as they themselves have try'd the world, and promised themselves satisfaction in it, instead of solid felicity and rest, they have sound it vanity and vexation of spirit.

2. Because they foresee the end of all things approaching; and this, as to themselves, they know cannot be far off.

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3. Because

3. Because they look by faith to another world, which is to endure for ever; and fo are making it their constant endeavour to secure a portion there, that may stand them in stead when this shall be no more.

APPLICATION.

1. May the wicked have their portion in the present life, a large share of outward good, while fome of the heirs of heaven have scarce on earth where to lay their heads? Then with what certainty may we infer a day of judgment, when the conduct of providence in fuch instances as these, shall be explained to satisfaction, and all things fet right, that here feemed fo much amiss?

2. We may infer, that they reckon without looking to the end of time and things, who call the proud happy, and are ready to envy the men who have their portion in this life. This the Psalmist once did, till he went into the fanctuary, when, by light from heaven, he better understood their misery in this world, and the greater destruction to which they were hastening in another. Surely thou didft set them in Slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction, Pfalm Ixxiii. 18.

3. What reason have we to pity those on whom Christ's words will fall in their full weight, Luke vi. 24. But wo unto you that are rich: for ye have received your consolation: A confolation unfatisfactory, and fhort-lived, Pfal. xlix. 17, 18. When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after bim: tho' while he lived, he bleffed his foul, &c.

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n jı 4. How earnestly should every one put up the Psalmist's prayer for himself, Lord deliver me from the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure. Beg of God that you may not be put off with your good things here; and go on, and be importunate with him for the grace that may enable you to make a wifer choice.

5. Is their condition so miserable that have their portion in the present life? how content, yea, how thankful should they be, who are res-

cued from it?

To excite to this, think how much better it is to have your evil things here, and go mourning to heaven, than now to have your good things, and go rejoicing to the place of torment, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Remember the time is short, and when God is giving you tears to drink in the greatest quantity, still know such words as these, Thou shalt forget thy misery, Job xi. 16. will be fully veri-

fied.

6. Lastly, What portion you have received from God, faithfully improve it for him. Remember his eye is upon you, and death and judgment before you: and having discharged your trust so as to secure the approbation of conscience now, with what pleasure may you wait at last, to hear from the mouth of the Judge, these words, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

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SERMON XVII.

PSALM LI. 5.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

HESE are the words of holy David, as humbling himself before the Lord, under the sense of his heinous transgression in the matter of Uriah. He had fallen into the crying fins of adultery and murther, and being by the prophet Nathan awakened to repentance, he here traces up these most vicious outward streams to their hidden fountain within himself. Cur Lord Christ tells us, that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c. Matt. xv. 18, 19. and true penitents are brought to fee and acknowledge this to be true as to themselves. Whatever temptations from without occasion their falling into fins, they own that the corruption of their inward natural propenfity inclines them to comply with them, and that without the restraint of divine providence and grace, it will break out into all actual fins. They do not only confess and bewail their particular daring crimes; tho' fome such may be a means of their first SER-

first conviction: but with bitterness reflect on their early and inward depravity, the root of them. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, &c.

In which words, which are a confession, we

may take notice,

1. Of the Person speaking, David, whose character in Scripture, is that of a man after

God's own beart, Acts xiii. 22.

2. Of the matter of it, or what he owns concerning himself, viz. that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; intimating how soon corruption took place in him, and how deep and lasting a possession it had gotten of him; that the blood was tainted from whence he sprung, and the materials insected, of which he was framed; that his person and pollution began together, and that sin being woven into his nature, was born with him: for who can bring a clean thing out of an angless?

clean thing out of an unclean?

This he mourns over, and loaths himself for, and has his eye upon it, as his shame; and he points to it, that others might observe it, as well as himself, for his greater humiliation. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, i.e. The fins of my life are not all that I have to confess and bewail; they being all but the fruit of my corrupted nature, and the deep pollution that from my very original has cleaved to me; how pure foever I hope to be, thro' grace, this was my first state, in fin did my mother conceive me. The good man casts back his eye, and makes the first rise of his fin a matter of humiliation, as every true penitent ought to do: and the confession he makes here of his own fad case, may be made by all others

others that in the common way partake of the human nature. God having made of one blood all nations of men, this may well be the cry in which they may all join, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.

The Observation I shall make from the words is this, That our original fin and corruption, is

matter of just and deep bumiliation. of more a boo

You have heard of the deplorable state into which the sirst man sell soon after he was made in the image of God. And lest any should say, what is that to us? The Scriptures of truth shew, that by one man (even this first man) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and that so death passed upon all men; for that all have sinned, Rom. v. 12. And that none may think to escape in the crowd, I will endeavour to bring the matter to every one's conscience, and shew, that all particularly may adopt the Psalmist's words, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and thence cry out with shame and sorrow, unclean, unclean.

In order to this, I would shew,

I. What you are to understand by the first, or by the original fin and corruption, and

why it is fo called.

II. That it cleaves to our natures from their 'first formation; and that all that come into the world in the common way, are conceived and born in it.

HI. Prove that it is finful and contrary to the holy nature, image and laws of God.

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IV. Give you some considerations that call for humiliation upon that account: and then I shall apply all.

I. To shew you what you are to understand by the first, or by the original corruption, and

why it is fo called.

And in order to do this, Man being created a rational creature, 'tis plain, his very end was to know, and love, and live to God his creator. Of this he was capable, being fully fitted for it, and inclined to it: without this he had not been perfect, as we are fure he was in his first production. God made mankind upright, but they have sought out many inventions, Eccles. vii. 29. By their early rebellion they quenched and lost the perfect habits of grace that made up the divine image on their souls.

To this, fin tended; and this Adam's confeffion and carriage after the fall, owning himself naked, dreading the presence of God, and his endeavouring to fly from him, sufficiently proves. And his primitive righteousness being gone, a moral pravity necessarily succeeded. The soul that tends not to heaven, cleaves to the earth and dust; and hereupon is perverted and debased, and as to all its powers is sadly changed: It becomes earthly and sensual, and from its inward viciousness, is inclined to sin, and delight-

eth in it.

This is the corruption which the first man contracted by his apostasy from God, and which, instead of the divine image, is by him derived down to us. 'Tis called original sin.

ated to fallen Africa comes

As it is conveyed from Adam the father of the world, and the original of mankind, who breaking the first link in the chain, whereby he, with all his kind, were united to God, he the first of it, with all his offspring, fell into a state of separation from him.

As we are infected with it from our very first original; its deadly efficacy entring our composition, while formed in the very retirements of nature, and attending us into the world at our

first coming into it.

As it is the original of all other fins, and pregnant with the feeds of them, and strongly inclining us to them, and being the corrupt fountain from whence all vicious defiling streams do flow.

II. 'Twill not be difficult to evidence that it cleaves to our natures from our first formation, and that we are conceived and born in fin.

God's own words concerning the inhabitants of a fallen world, even after the flood had passed over it, Gen. viii. 21. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. God saith of his own people, thou wast called a transgressor from the womb, Isa. xlviii. 8. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, John iii. 6. i. e. corrupt and sinful, as the principle is from whence it springs; it being able of itself to produce nothing better. The streams partake of the nature of the fountain, and the branches of that of the root.

Such as were created anew in Christ Jesus, as Seth and others were; yet as they were naturally related to fallen Adam, they were begotten

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in his own likeness, Gen. v. 3. and so bare the image of the earthly man, before they were restored to the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. xv.

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And after any such have passed through the second birth, their grace is not by natural generation propagated to their offspring. Religious parents have many times children destitute of their faith and holiness, and always so, till the divine Spirit, in a supernatural way, is pleased to work it: witness Noah in the case of Cham, and Abraham in that of Ishmael, Isaac in Esau, and David in Absalom, and Eli in Hophni and Phinehas. And thousands since have experienced this truth, that all that are born into the kingdom of Grace, are so born, not of blood, nor of the will of the sless, nor of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13.

The most holy on earth are sanctified but in part, and do beget children as they are men, not as they are faints; hence though they are renewed themselves, their offspring are defiled: as the purest wheat, though industriously clean'd by art; yet being cast into the ground, always comes up with chaff, and needs to be purged the same way, after it is reaped, before the in-

crease of it is found pure and clean grain.

2. The need in which all stand of salvation by Christ (even infants as well as others, before their committing any actual transgression) speaks them conceived and born in sin.

To lead you into this by a few steps.

1. 'Tis plain from Scripture, that none of the children of men are, or can be faved, as innocent.

2. 'Tis

2. 'Tis equally clear, that Christ has undertaken the salvation of none but sinners: as none else can need it, so no other shall have any remedy by him.

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3. Either therefore infants perish for ever, or are saved by Christ: grant either, and it will

evidence their being under fin.

1. 'Tis plain from Scripture, that none of the children of men are or can be faved, as innocent, and on the terms of the first covenant, or of the law of their creation: for this required perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience without all fin; which we are affured was broken, and thereby all hope of falvation loft. None but Christ, fince the fall, ever came up thereto; and therefore, none can this way ftand with acceptance before God. If we say we have no fin, or that we have not finned, we deceive ourselves, and make him, i. e. God, a Liar, 1 John i. 8, to. There is none righteous, viz. in himself without a Redeemer, no not one, Rom. iii. 10. They are all gone out of the way, ver. 12. And all the world is become guilty before God, none excepted, ver. 19. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his fight, ver. 20. For all have finned and come short of the glory of God. Such are expresly mentioned, as finned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression, Rom. v. 14. viz. actually and perfonally, as he did; and yet these are dealt with, as his vitiated and guilty feed, deriving fin from him together with their natures. To him therefore we are pointed, as to the original of both: By one man fin entered into the world, and death by

by fin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, Rom. v. 12. fore-noted. By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; because by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, vers. 18, 19. and so all were, even by nature, children of wrath. Thro' the offence of one many are dead, i. e. spiritually, and under a sentence of eternal misery, verse 15. And the temporal death still continues to reign too; so that in Adam all die. This was the reason of Christ's suffering in our room, and this shews the need there was of his suffering for us. Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, 2 Cor.v. 14. Whence,

2dly, Christ has undertaken the salvation of none but sinners: his mediation is in order to a recovery, which benefit none can stand in need of, but such as are fallen and become misera-

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His title and office as a Redeemer, and the declared end of his coming into the world, and the feveral parts of his work of falvation, do all

of them prove this.

He had given him at his first appearance, and still bears the name Jesus, because he was sent to save his people from their sins; which shew the state all those are in, for whom he has received his saving power. None but such as are guilty and miserable, need him, or can be said to be his saved ones. The whole, he tells us, need not the physician, but they that are sick, Matt. ix. 12. And therefore, he came to seek and to save that which was lost, Luke xix. 10. In which state David concludes he was, as soon as he be-

gan to be, as being shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. And this may be affirmed of all that have benefit from Christ's redemption: for this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world

to fave finners, I Tim. i. 15.

And when Christ is faid by the grace of God to taste death for every man, Heb. ii. 9. and to be the only mediator between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all, I Tim. ii. 5. and faid to be a propitiation for our fins, and not for ours only, but for the fins of the whole world; how clear is it that the whole world are finners, of what age foever, and that they needed his death and facrifice in order to their ranfom and recovery. I might infift on what is particularly noted, that Christ came to redeem them that were under the law; and he redeems none, but by dying; and all for whom he dies, are finners, guilty and perishing creatures, which magnifies the divine mercy employed for their recovery: Rom. v. 8. God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

3dly, Therefore it being common for infants to be snatched away by death: either they are miserable, or happy for ever. If the former be supposed, their state of punishment supposes some sin which deserves it, feeing the judge of all the earth can't but do right; and therefore will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, and deal with the innocent and the guilty alike. And if any are saved, it must be by Christ, in the way set down in the Gospel; as there is salvation in

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no other, nor any other name under heaven given among men in order thereto, Acts iv. 12. The covenant of grace founded in his blood is all that is now in force, which respects all that are under it, as fallen creatures; for if there had been a law, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law, and then Christ would have died in vain: but the scripture hath concluded all under fin, that falvation may be obtained thro' him who was promised, and in the fame way to all, Gal. iii. 21, 22. And those whom Christ faves, he saves by washing, justification, and fanctification, which shew their preceding fin and pollution.

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Christ said of the children he took into his arms and bleffed, that of fuch is the kingdom of God, Mark x. 14. And he tells us, that without regeneration none can fee that kingdom, John iii. 3. And there is no regeneration, but from fin; which even the youngest are infected with, and must be purged from, if ever they are admitted into that holy state and place. Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, Eph. v. 25, &c. And if there are any that fay, infants have no fin, then they have nothing to be cleanfed from, and so belong not to that body, which in the freest love he gave himself for, to that end.

Moreover, all that are glorified are first justihed, and this not as finless by the law of innocency, and that of Moses, Acts xiii. 39. but freely by grace, thro' the redemption that is in Christ

X 2

Felus,

Jesus, Rom. iii. 24. I Cor. i. 30. And an eminent part of that redemption which we have by him, is the forgiveness of fins thro' his blood; which proves, that the youngest have sin, or they can have none remitted in order to their

being faved.

Christ makes none righteous by his obedience, but such as Adam made sinners by his disobedience, Rom. v. 19. If ever any of the tenderest age were made righteous by him, they as well as others, were sinners; which, seeing they cannot be by any other but original sin, 'tis plain they were conceived and born infected and polluted by that sin of his. Of the truth of this, we have sensible evidence in the early eruptions and fruits, and in the penal effects of this sin.

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The

(1.) In its early eruptions and fruits. How much more prone do we see children to be to fin than to holiness? What aversion to good, and strong inclinations to evil are discovered by them, before they are capable of being led by imitation? And the remains of this natural corruption, is matter of complaint to faints, as long as they abide on earth, even to fuch of them as were foonest renewed, and before any vicious habits could be contracted by a course of actual finning; which therefore were born with them. The first things that spring up in the field of nature, are the feeds of fin; fo that we are estranged from the womb, Pfal. Iviii. 3. alienated from the life and love of God, and destitute of his likeness. How can be be clean that is born of a woman? Job xxv. 4.

The vicious inclinations which appear in the cradle; the violent motions of anger which difturb sucklings; their endeavour to exercise a weak revenge on those that displease them, &c. may convince us, that corruption is natural, and proceeds from an infected original.

A depraved nature descends to us from Adam fallen, conveyed to us by our parents. All are born under the infection, it is become common to mankind. As many as in an ordinary manner come into the world, come with the seeds of those sins which time ripens, and opportunity

brings forth.

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That our nature is become finful, is early shewn by its corrupt tendencies and affections. Every child that is born, is a living instance of this, in its proneness to fin, and dislike of holiness; being so much more easily made vile, than kept innocent in any common measure, and with fewer and weaker arguments drawn to be wicked, than to act holily; nay, having that in them which would ferve as a tempter to evil, and which often doth, tho' there be no ill example, or folicitation from without. And from the vifible workings, we may guess at the inward cause. A tree is known by its fruit, and as none would look that thorns should yield figs, so on the contrary, a fig-tree will not produce the fruit of thorns, or a vine that of thiftles. immediate streams partake of the nature of their fountain, and shew of what kind it is.

To be given or inclined to be vain and foolish, proud and obstinate, lying and rebellious; to be bent on what is displeasing to God, and de-

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structive

structive to the soul, against instructions, examples, nay, chastisements; to be forward to evil as soon as we begin to act, and difficultly restrained, are no obscure notices of our early infection, and that we are defiled by sin from our first production.

(2.) Its penal effects farther confirm this.

To what trouble are the tenderest infants born? to what evils are they exposed, and speedily feel? They no sooner begin to live, but they are dying; a thousand diseases are digging their graves, and bringing them down to it. What severe treatment do they meet with as soon as they come into the world? they are sometimes only shewn alive, and then depart in the same breath or pulse that gives notice of life, which, by its faintness, shews the immediate approach of death. And if they have a longer stay, their cries and tears, and restless wailing, effectually speak their misery.

These being apparent marks of God's displeasure deserved by sin, and threatned to it; 'tis plain that all that are thus treated, are transgressors from the womb: and coming sinful and depraved into the empire of their offended sovereign, how can a more favourable reception

be expected?

The wages of fin is death, with all the fickness, diseases, pains and tortures that go before it, and tend to it. And all being subject to these as soon as they begin to be; where we discern the effect, we may conclude the cause: their native sin and corruption procures, and renders just their bitterest suffering.

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III⁴ Thing, To confider the finfulness of our original corruption. 'Tis finful, as being contrary to the holy will and law of God, by which fin is to be measured. It is a transgression of the law, I John iii. 4. Man being a rational creature, he is indispensibly bound to love the Lord his God with all his heart: and the law requires the same, even the perfect rectitude of all his faculties, and truth in the inward parts; and it condemns all corrupt and contrary inclinations and practices.

To want therefore the divine image which ought to be in us, and, on the contrary, to lie under the power of that corruption, which sways a quite contrary way, is a nonconformity to, and a transgression of the whole law of God; and so is not only sin, but is all sins in one. It is a

body of death exceeding finful.

And 'tis fo far voluntary as to aggravate its evil: partly as voluntarily contracted by Adam, the head of our and his family, whose will was the representative of ours, at the time he sinned: partly as it is in the will and affections of us his offspring, as well as was in himself; for there is an evil disposition inclining to sin, in all of us that are his sons and offspring, notwithstanding means used to correct it: partly as to its effects, the numberless actual transgressions which freely and with all allowances as to all the unregenerate, flow from it; whereby, as soon as capable, they consent to strengthen and cherish it, and avoid or oppose the means whereby it should be mortified and subdued.

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IV. A

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IV. A few confiderations will shew what reafon we have to be humbled on the account of this.

Let us turn in upon our own Souls, and con-

fider the ruin this fin has made there.

In general, there is a privation of all good: the divine image is quenched, no grace or liveliness, or remains of the life and likeness of God are to be found in us.

How dark and deformed do all things appear? Rom. vii. 18. In my flesh, in my nature as corrupt, there dwelleth no good thing. The faculties remain; but their primitive rectitude is loft. And in the room of this, universal corruption fills all, rendering us averse to God and all that is good, and strongly propense to all evil. An immortal foul is alienated from the life of God, filled with enmity against him, ready to be imployed, in any acts of unholiness displeasing to him. And, is it not fad, that a foul made by God, and made for him, shall have no defires after him, no love to him, his ways, worship, fervants, or kingdom? should be turned from him, and bent on fin, the abominable thing which he hates?

Confider this fin, in feveral views and respects.

Confider it,

1. As to its early rife. It is incorporated with our natures, and had a being in us before we ap-

peared in the world.

And tho' men use this way to excuse their sinfulness, 'tis my nature, yet 'tis one of the greatest aggravations of this kind: For how justly may the infinitely holy God loath such creatures as we are?

2. Consider it as to its exceeding sinfulness. How light soever some may make of it, it will not lie so light on an awakened conscience.

(1.) As it is a contradiction to the whole law at once, and as it violates the law at all times. In respect of this, we are sinners from the first; and we continue to be so, till we are compleatly ruined, if we are not through grace recovered.

(2.) As it is the spring and root of all othersins: for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, &c. Matt. xv. 19. It is pregnant with the seeds of them all, and strongly inclineth us to them all. This, one calls the tree of death bearing all manner of cursed fruit, whose leaves tend to the destruction of mankind.

It is worse than the vine of Sodom, or of the shelds of Gomorrab: its grapes are grapes of gall, its clusters are bitter, its wine as the poison of

dragons.

(3.) As 'tis a fixed and active corruption; which closely adheres to us and works in us. It is an inhabitant that will never be dislodged, till soul and body be separated. Like as a freting leprofy got into the Israelites houses, occasioned their pulling down: so our earthly tabernacle must be taken down before we are quit of it. Grace breaks its powers in this life, but will not give the last stroke to it till death; and in such as go hence unrenewed, it will remain for ever. Where it resides, it works and gives a readiness to act, as 'tis the property of all habits to do. Where the restraint of providence and grace is taken off, it hurries men on to act all manner of wickedness with greediness.

(4.) As

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(4.) As in this all abominations, how vile and complicated foever, are wrapt up. *Hazael* could not believe what the prophet told him of the wickedness of his heart, 2 Kings viii. 12, 13.

(5.). As upon viewing its fpreading nature and extent we find that no faculty is free, but all defiled, of the inward as well as outward man. The enmity of the mind, the obstinacy of the will, the hardness of the heart, the carnality of

the affections, &c. prove this.

(6.) As feeing what monstrous deformity it hath brought into the foul. Its faculties are all perverted, and for want of holy principles, become subject to sensual inclinations: which at the presentation of agreeable objects, hurry poor men to make provision for the sless, to fulfil it in the lust thereof. The greatest deformity of the body is not comparable to this.

(7.) Lastly, As by this men may see, they become a-kin to Satan, and liable to the same

misery with him.

What Christ tells the corrupt Jews is true of all others, till they are regenerated, ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do. He works in them, takes them captive at his pleasure; and after they have served him here on earth, unless they be renewed by God's grace, they are to be his companions for ever.

APPLICATION.

1. Are all conceived and born in fin? what a mournful profpect may we hence take of the state of mankind fince the fall? All that come into the world, come into it guilty and defiled:

and

and how many grow worse and worse while they stay in it, and through their rejection of pardoning and fanctifying grace, go out of it unchanged; and fo in their after state have reason to wish, that they had never been born and seen the light?

Infancy begins in fin, and childhood and youth are vanity: and in the age wherein men should do most for God, how little regard has he from them! How active are they for Satan in their way to destruction! Who that loves God does not fee reason to be grieved? Or who that is tender of the falvation of man will not be melted at the thoughts of this?

2. How little reason have any to boast of their birth; all bringing fin with 'em into the world to stain all their glory? How poor a thing is it for any to be born admired by men, whose souls are destitute of the divine image, and so are vile

and abominable in the fight of God?

- 7. Hence see, whither our complaints should be turned, and over what our tears poured forth, even over our in-dwelling corruption. What lamentations do we hear made over outward calamities? but who in the mean time lays his hand upon his breaft, confessing and be-

wailing the plague of his own heart?

4. Seeing you were conceived and born in fin, with what seriousness should you enquire, whether you are new born, yea or no? your case is fad by nature, and 'tis a great work that must be wrought in you for your healing: have you experienced any thing of that work? Were you ever brought to confider, how vile you are by nature,

nature, and to bewail it, and lay it to heart? If not, now look inward, and fee how destitute your fouls are of the divine image, and go away mourning. And you can't but do fo, when you confider, and find reason to say, my heart is filthy, my affections disordered, the powers of my foul wounded, the image of God loft, and Satan's image visible upon me. Now is this a case to be rested in? This, I say, when it is as dangerous as it is finful; it speaking you children of wrath, and every day in peril of falling into hell: and nothing short of renewing grace can affuredly heal you, which is to be had from none but God, through Christ; and the longer you neglect it, the more bars you put in its way.

Will you resolve therefore, to betake yourfelves to him, if you have not already done it? And that you will be earnest with God, till he has given you his grace, and bent your hearts to live to him? Would you do thus, O how would Satan be disappointed, and those in hea-

ven rejoice!

5. This being your natural state, what encouragement may you fetch from such a promife as that? Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filtbiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And to confirm your faith, and raise your hope, hear the voice of the exalted Redeemer, speaking from the midst of the throne, Behold I make all things neture

things new, Rev. xxi. 5. Go and put youselves into his hand, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou

canst make me clean.

6. Seeing all are conceived and born in fin, how much better to faints is the day of their death, than the day of their birth? The day they are born, they come into a world of forrow, because they bring fin with them: but the day they die, they put off fin together with their bodies, and enter into the joy of their Lord.

Let the faith and hope of this deliverance at death, wean you from this earth, which thro' your pollution, as well as its own curse, is made unsit for your rest; and quicken your desire after heaven, where your inheritance will be undesiled: let it make you willing to be gone, and be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord, which is by far the better. And if you are already renewed, the Lord keep you from falling, &c.

7. Hence learn that all have need of Christ,

tho' all are not equally sensible of it.

8. With what compassion should parents confider the case of their children, and endeavour that, tho' they are born in sin, they may not continue slaves under it. They may remember for their comfort, that their childrens case is hopeful: our Lord Jesus Christ has said, suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, &c. Mat. xix. 14. Tho' they have a dark mind, a vile nature, a temper bent to sin; yet there is hope that they may be recovered to God's image, in the way of using his appointed means.

SERMON XVIII.

LAMENT. III. 22.

It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

able acknowledgment, which the prophet makes to God, at the same time that he laments over the distressed state of his people. He had largely set forth the grievous calamities God had brought upon them, with which he could not but be deeply affected: but whatever complaints might be made before God, as setting forth their case, there was no reason for making any against God, but rather for praising him. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

We may here observe,

First, Of whom it was that the prophet spake, viz. of God's people the Jews, considered as very sinful, and having grievously provoked him.

Secondly, What, as the effect of this, they had reason to own to be their due; even not only the present low state of affliction, which their nation

nation was under, but a total consumption and

utter destruction, which it deserved.

Thirdly, To what their preservation from this extremity of evil was owing, viz. to the mercies of the Lord; which they were now called to regard, in their number, variety, and long continuance. They had mercies mixt with their afflictions; tho' chaftened fore, they were not of 'em delivered over to death, and fo cut off from being a nation. This Prophet, and many others besides him, had escaped with their lives, notwithstanding the great destruction the king of Babylon had made in their city and country. and were continued in a state of hope that God had bleffings still in referve for them. And for these favours which he and others with him still enjoyed, this Prophet religiously makes acknowledgments to God's mercies and never-failing compassions, in the words of the text.

Observ. The people of God under the heaviest afflictions, are to look to the far greater miseries which their sins deserve, and to own their being kept from these to be of the Lord's mercies; not from any worth in themselves, but because his

compassions fail not.

Under this four things offer themselves to our consideration.

I. That God has the ordering of both what his people feel, and what they are kept from; that they are afflicted, and yet not confumed under affliction or by it, are both

of them of God's ordering.

II. That God may righteously afflict so extensively and extremely, as to complete the misery mifery mentioned in the text upon finners,

even consume them.

III. Such is the evil of fin, and fo much of this is to be found in his own children, as would expose them to this, should God deal with them according to it.

IV. 'Tis to the divine mercy they owe their

preservation.

When we have fpoken to these, way will be

made for the application.

I. God has the ordering of both what his people feel; and what they are kept from feeling; that they are cast down, and yet not destroyed; afflicted, and yet not consumed. All their times are in his hand. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; but according to the direction of him who formeth the light, and createth darkness, the Lord who doeth all these things, Isa. xlv. 7. Amos iii. 6. He orders what affliction shall befal any one of his children, and in what manner; to what degree it shall prevail, how long continue, and what shall be the issue. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive : he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up, I Sam. ii. 6. He checks this or the other distemper that seizeth any of his fervants, and would make a prey of life, by faying, as to the furious ocean, bitherto thou shalt go, but no farther, Job xxxviii. This is agreeable to his nature, and his relation to them; to his love and promise to his people, and to the defign he is carrying on by all his dealings with them, which is to fit them for the kingdom he hath prepared for them. The

The Lord is merciful and gracious, flow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will be keep his anger for ever, Pfal. ciii. 8, 9. Like as a father pitieth his children: fo the Lord pitieth them that fear him, ver. 13. For he knoweth our frame: he remembreth that we are dust, ver. 14. He declares, I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me and the souls which I have made, Ifa. lvii. 16. In judgment he remembers mercy, correcting in measure, and staying the rough wind in the day of his eastwind, Ifa. xxvii. 8. His afflicting his people is not for their ruin, but that they may be more refined. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his fin, Isa. xxvii. 9. They are in heaviness when, and as far as is necessary, of which infinite wisdom is fittest to judge: and therefore he lifts them up, and casts them down, according as he fees it to be best for them. Thus are they chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, I Cor. xi. 32.

II. The people of God under their heaviest sufferings, are to look to the far greater misery which God may righteously inflict upon them for their sins, even that which is here mentioned

in the text, viz. confuming them.

Who knoweth the power of God's anger? according to the blackest fear we can have of it, so is his wrath, and much more terrible and heavy. According to this in general he might lay upon us whatever the most miserable of mankind hath endured, that are either gone before us out of it,

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or are still in this world. And who can tell the severe trials some have met with? the pains and tortures they have gone thorow? How many cases have there been, and still are there, a thousand times worse than our own, as to what some have endured from the immediate hand of God, or the rage of men, or the malice of Satan?

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Think of Job, once flourishing in all manner of prosperity, the greatest man in the east, and how fast he was reduced from his defireable to the most deplorable state. The Chaldeans and Sabeans took away his oxen and camels, and flew his fervants: the fire of God fell from heaven, and confumed his sheep, and those that kept them: before the messenger of these sad tidings had done speaking, another came with the mournful account, that a whirlwind had overturned the house where his ten children were feafting, by which they were all flain: then the Devil, by permission, smote him with fore boils, from the fole of his foot unto his crown, filling him with the keenest anguish, so that he fat down among the ashes; where his wife and his friends, instead of refreshing him, rake in his wounds, and prove miserable comforters to him.

But more particularly,

Think of the mifery due to fin, as it includes,

and Spirit of God, being abandoned by him, and left to live without him in the world. This is what fin deserves; and should we be dealt with

with according to it, 'twould be our case. And how miserable is that man in whom there is no life of grace! from whom the holy Spirit is retired, giving him up to his own hearts lusts, to walk in his own counsel. Who can think of this as what might have been our case, without trembling? How much mercy is mixt with what we suffer in comparison of this!

O my foul, I am apt to complain under the want of this and the other external enjoyment: How little could these signify, were I under the power of corruption, destitute of the likeness of God, dark, dead, and disaffected to him? how much of hell would there be in such a temper? how black a mark is it on that man

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2. 'Tis part of the misery due to sin, to be cast out of the favour of God, and abhorred by him. And O my soul, may not this be said of me? But if I have reason to hope it is not, how easily may I be reconciled to any external misery, to whatever I am denied of, or put to groan under? For if his loving kindness be continued to me, 'tis better than life, and is enough for my support in the absence of any earthly good. Let my heavenly father afflict me how he will, chasten me in what instance he pleases; so he love me, I will not complain. You that are favoured with this, whatever be your sufferings, own them far less than your iniquities deferve.

3. A being stript of all external comforts, of whatever might make life easy or desireable; a deprivation of all such things, is our due upon Y 2

the account of fin. Am I ready to murmur or repine when any thing valuable is withdrawn? How many mercies have I left that are equally forfeited, and might righteously be removed? I am less than the least of all the mercies I enjoy, unworthy of any: yet in what plenty are they renewed? and tho' some are blasted or taken away, let me not lose the sense of those that remain.

4. Having the body filled with pain and torment, making its beauty to confume away as a moth fretten garment, is part of the punishment due to fin. The finner might have no foundness in his flesh because of God's anger: nor rest in his bones, because of his fin. He might be chastened with pain on his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life might abhor bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh might be consumed away, so as not to be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out. His soul might draw near to the grave and his life to the destroyers, Job xxxiii. 19, &c. This would be case of every one, was he dealt with according to his sins.

Yea farther,

5. Having the foul filled with horror, belongs to the punishment of fin; and which some have felt to that degree, as to extort from them that doleful cry, whilft I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. Inward and outward troubles meet in the man with whom God deals according to his sins. A pained body and wounded spirit, make up the misery which is the wages of iniquity, and these continued without intermission to the sinner's last breath.

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No part might be free any moment of time; but as long as his life continues, the guilty creature might be followed with the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, the poison of

which might drink up his spirit.

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Lastly, Being cut off by death, and cast into hell, is the destruction due to fin. The wages of. fin is death, even that which is opposed to eternal life, Rom. vi. 23. The terrible sentence which finners shall hear after death, is, depart from me ye curfed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, Matth. xxv. 45. Where they shall be tormented day and night, and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever. O my foul, think of this, and be for ever filent under the heaviest forrows meafured by time. I am apt to complain my prefent affliction is great; but what is this to the being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power? How fearful a thing is it to fall into the hand of the living God! who can stand before him when he is angry? Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure everlasting burnings? And yet how dreadful soever they are, none could escape them, were the guilty to be dealt with as their iniquities deferve.

But this leads us to the

III. General. Such is the evil of fin, and fo much of it is found even in faints themselves, that should God be strict to mark iniquity, they would have nothing to expect but to be consumed in the dreadful way forementioned; even to be Y 2 deprived

deprived of all earthly comforts, banished from heaven, never to see the face of God there, and sent as accursed to hell, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire without hope, or possibility of release or end.

r. Such is the evil of fin, that it deserves this. 'Tis the abominable thing that God's soul hates; and well it may, as by it his majesty and justice are affronted, his power and wisdom disowned, his goodness despised; his holiness reproached, his truth contradicted, his promises and threatnings slighted, as if his favours were not valuable, nor his wrath to be feared. By fin, God is robbed of his glory which he should have in the love and service of his rational creatures; Christ is opposed in the kind design on which he came into the world, and the Spirit is resisted: and thro' guilt contracted in all this, death is deserved. This is a short view of the evil of sin.

2. So much of this is found in Saints themfelves, as would expose them to destruction, should God deal with them according to it. If they say they have no sin, they deceive themseves, and the truth is not in them. And as their sins admit of peculiar aggravations, they must own whatever evil God inslicts upon them in the prefent life, it is far less than their iniquity deserves. They sin in the nearest relation to God, as their father; after they have been under the strongest obligations to Christ, as his disciples and followers; against the operations of the Spirit upon them, and the tendency of the life of grace within them. They sin after they have been pardoned and forgiven of God, often renewed their cove-

nant with him, and have been peculiarly favoured by him, and fet in the way to heaven and perfect bleffedness there, in the enjoyment of him.

'Tis hence plain, the guilt is not small that follows the provocations of God's sons and

daughters.

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IV. 'Tis to the divine mercy and compassions, that even the people of God owe their preservation from being consumed. To his mercies mixing with, and accompanying every affliction, to his mercies common and special, to the provisions of providence, the presence, affistances and experiences of friends, the grace and comforts of his Spirit, the light of his countenance, and the sense of his love.

The people of God owe their preservation to his compassions over them, and to these as seasonably discovered towards them, in mitigating,

eafing, and removing his hand.

Three things may be touched upon under this,

namely.

1. The matter of fact, that it is to the mercy of God that his people owe their preservation.

2. What kind of mercy this is.

3. And, how exercised.

of God that even his people owe their preservation. The evidence of this is obvious.

(1.) As it is not owing to any worth nor power of their own, not to any thing they could do

for God, or do against him.

(1.) Not to any worth in themselves, or any thing they could do for God. The impossibility of this, is intimated in the inquiry, Job xxii. 2.

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Can a man be profitable unto God? So far from this that the Pfalmist makes it a wonder, that man should be the object of any regard from heaven. Lord, what is man that thou art mind-

ful of bim? Pfalm viii, 4.

Before conversion, how often, and how many ways were our lives forseited? By what astonishing favour did we live! Since recovered, and brought home to God, and put amongst his children, how many have been our falls and failures, upon the account of which we have reason to pray, Lord enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. If thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? Psalm cxxx. 3. i. e. who shall be acquitted, or escape condemnation? What can any plead that he has done for God, to support a claim of being saved?

(2.) And as little can any do against God, whereby to avoid destruction. What heart can endure, or what hand can be so strong, when he cometh to judge them, as to lay a bar in the

way of his deserved wrath?

2. Nor is their preservation owing to this, that God is unacquainted with the sins of his people, or makes light of them. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good; and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, so as to approve of it, wherever it is found.

3. Nor is their preservation owing to God's want of power to punish to the height of the desert of sin. He could as easily strike with death, as sickness, and can cast into hell, as well as

into

into the grave. He has given dreadful proofs of his power on his implacable enemies; and that his people are otherwise treated, is because his

mercies and compassions fail not.

1. It was mercy that spared them in their unregenerate state, tho' they were by nature children of wrath, even as others, Ephef. ii. 2. Wrath was their portion by birth-right; what they were fentenced to, and feemed bent upon; what hung over them, and what they were fometime in the greatest danger of dropping into. The wages of fin is death; and all, as conceived in fin and shapen in iniquity, are liable to it, and whilst they remain unchanged, this is what they are preparing themselves for, and upon the brink of. While guilty and unholy, none could fay of us any morning, that we should be spared 'till night; or at night, that we should see another day; our times being in God's hand, who could eafily have made us the monuments of his wrath, and had many provocations to do it. And what but mercy could lead God to spare us?

(2.) 'Twas mercy in God that provided us an all-sufficient Saviour, even his own Son. John iii. 16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who so ever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(3.) 'Twas mercy that from eternity defigned their recovery whom God is pleased to set apart for himself; and according to it, in the appointed season, he called them into the kingdom of his dear Son. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, Rom. ix. 16. And when they are thus far recovered,

vered, 'tis the same mercy that goes on to spare,' pity, pardon, and accept them, and at last perfectly fave them with eternal glory.

2. Let us fee what kind of mercy it is.

1. 'Tis most free and sovereign. This is his own declaration, Exod. xxxiii. 19. Rom. ix. 15. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have com-It fetches not its motives and inducements from any thing without him, as a deferving or procuring cause. Had God deferred to interpose between us and death, or refused to concern himself for our preservation, 'till we could deserve it, how certainly had we perished, and should we do so still?

2. The mercy of God is rich and full. It is large and abundant in the fountain, and extending to all his people. That it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not confumed, is the language of those that are gone before us: and we must join in the same acknowledgment, and all that come after us to the end of the world.

The dangers we have been in, feen and unfeen, are innumerable; but the mercies of God have been proportioned to our dangers and neceffities of foul and body. He hath a multitude of loving kindnesses, is rich in mercy, abundant in goodness, and in this even to us ourselves. Let who will speak hardly of him, we must own, 'tis of the Lord's mercy that we are not confumed.

3. 'Tis most wonderful mercy; considering by whom it is exercised, towards whom, against what provocations, in what manner, and to (1.) Conwhat ends.

(1.) Confidering by whom exercised, 'tis of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. How astonishing is it that the High and Holy One, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, will attend to the preservation of any in this lower world!

(2.) Confidering to whom 'tis exercis'd, to men, to finners; recovered indeed, but very imperfect; fuch whom he fetched out of nothing by his power, and from a state of guilt by his grace.

(3.) Confidering against what provocations, even from those towards whom 'tis exercised. How often do we offend our God, while preserved by him? How many, how great are our fins? How grievous to him, and how plain before him? How worthy of destruction are we, and yet he spares us!

(4.) Confidering in what manner it is exercised by God, even with delight. Judgment is his strange work; but mercy is his darling attribute, and he taketh pleasure in them that

hope in it.

(5.) Confidering to what end it is exercised, viz. in order to their salvation. They are preferved on earth, while God has any thing to do for them or in them, preparatory to their being with him in heaven, the blissful state to which

by mercy they are defigned.

4. 'Tis most seasonable mercy. How often has my life been in danger, and yet God has appeared for me, and kept me from going quick into the pit? when unable to help myself, and the help of fellow creatures was tried in vain, in how remarkable a juncture did he take

take my case into his own hands; proving thereby, that to him alone belong the iffues from death?

5. The merey of God, to which faints owe their prefervation, is diffinguishing, such as he did not exercise towards apostate spirits. God fpared not the angels that finned: and with how many of my fellow creatures hath he made a

quick dispatch?

6. Lastly, the mercy of God is never-failing. 'Tis faid to be from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, Pfal. ciii. 17. This makes up the greatest part of his name, and what he esteems his glory, Exod. xxxiv. 6. The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Tho' the tempter would infinuate that his mercy is clean gone, the believer's prefervation is a proof of the contrary, that his compassions have not fail'd, nor ever shall. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?

3. As to the manner in which this mercy is

exercised.

1. 'Tis thro' a Mediator, for his fake, and upon his account: and fo,

2. In a covenant way. According to that covenant, by which he hath engaged to be a God to his people, and deal with them as fuch; by which he hath declared, that all his ways shall be mercy and truth towards them, and

tho'

tho' he visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes, Nevertheless, his loving kindness will be not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33.

APPLICATION.

1. Do the compassions of God towards his people never sail? How desireable is it to be some of the number! And as, thro' his son, he is willing to receive you, and be a father to you, why should you not this day hearken to his voice, and with all your hearts yield yourselves to him? And if you do so, then, as belonging to his family, under all your trials, read with application what he has said for the support of such, the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy, Psal. cxlvii.

2. How strangely do they forget themselves, who are ready to murmur under present sufferings, when 'tis of the Lord's mercy that they are kept from utter destruction, and because his

compaffions fail not!

3. Is it owing to the mercy of God that believers are not confumed? With what adoring thankfulness will they celebrate that mercy to all eternity, by which they are not only, not confumed, but have their salvation crown'd with eternal glory! Your preservation now is in order to your perfect blessedness at last.

Do not fink under present sufferings, they will soon be over; nor faint in that way, which hath

like a Shopherd: in parties

Heaven at the end of it.

SERMON XIX.

ISAIAH XL. 11.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently had those that are with young.

der which God gives out to his fervants the prophets, about the errand he would have them go upon, and the work he would have them employed in, verf. 1, 2. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, faith your God, &c. And when comfort was to be preached, Christ predicted as to come, was to be the text: of whom we have an endearing description, both as to the relation he stands in to his people, and as to the manner in which he would answer it to them, when he actually came.

We have here fet before us these things.

1. The relation in which Christ stands to his

people; he is their Shepherd.

2. What he will do for them, as standing in this relation. In general, he shall feed them like a Shepherd; in particular, his temper and carriage

carriage will be suitable to the state and condition of the several sorts of sheep, that make up his slock; and to the seeble and weak, particu-

larly, he will shew a special regard.

This is represented in expressions that speak the greatest tenderness. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young: alluding to Jacob's care and management in driving his slocks and herds with young, that they might not be over driven, and thereby die, Gen. xxxiii. 13, 14.

Observe,

1. Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people, and will feed them, his flock, as becometh such a one.

2. As Christ's flock is made up of believers of different attainments in grace, his carriage is suitable to every one of them; particularly he regards in the most compassionate manner, the weak and tender, here set forth by the lambs, and such as are with young.

1. Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people, and will feed them, his stock, as becometh such a one.

Under this Observation, I shall shew,

I. How this title of shepherd agrees to Jesus Christ.

II. Some of the characters that belong to him as fuch.

III. What is implied in his feeding bis flock.

IV. How he does this like a shepherd.

I. To shew how this title of a shepherd agrees

to Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord is spoken of in scripture under several characters, viz. as a Physician, a Ruler.

Ruler, the Captain of our Salvation, &c. and in this, and many other places, as a Shepherd: a metaphor full of comfort to fuch who have any interest in him. And it is to a good shepherd that he is here compared: and there are many instances in which his likeness to such a one,

will appear.

1. A Shepherd is called to the office and trust; and this may eminently be said of Christ. God the father appointed him to this office, and fitted him for it, according to his promise, Ezek. xxxiv. 23. I will set up one shepherd over them, &c. even my servant David; he shall feed them, and be shall be their shepherd. And upon this account God calls him my shepherd, Zech. xiii. 7. Christ's commission, as a shepherd, to feed and look after fouls, is from God. This he feems to refer to, when he speaks of entering in by the door into the sheepfold, John x. 2. He that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the Theep.

2. A good shepherd knows his sheep; and in this Christ is most exact. He knows every individual the Father hath given him, and will lose none. He is well acquainted with their case and wants, and knows how to suit himself to them. By this he proves his fitness for his office, and his just claim to it, John x. 14. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep. He knows them so as to call his own sheep by name, and can be no stranger to any thing relating to

them, or necessary for them.

3. A good shepherd seeks his flock; and such a shepherd is Christ, Luke xix. 10. For the fon loft he ral de the

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of man is come to feek and to fave that which was lost. The chosen of God that are given to him, he feeks to recover, and lead out of their natural lost estate; and when they afterwards wander and go astray, he feeks them: To prevent their drawing back, or wandring on to perdition, he feasonably awakens them to repentance,

and fo brings them home.

Some are fought out, and brought in fooner; others later: fome are called into the vineyard at the fixth hour; others at the ninth, and some not till the eleventh hour: But every one given him of the Father, shall be fought out by him. When the time is come, he fets about it; it belonging to his office to feek fuch. After he had gathered disciples among the Jews, he thus speaks with an eye to the Gentiles, other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, &c. John x. 16. This, as being God's shepherd, was expected from him, and undertaken by him. He feeks his sheep with an earnestness proportionable to the price he hath paid for them, and to the joy and fatisfaction he shall have in them, when he hath perfectly faved them. And as for those that after their converfion, at any time wander from him, how provoking foever the fin of fuch may be, he will not let go his hold of them, and drop his concern for them; but will sooner or later recover them, and bring them back, angitab adt gnites

4. A good shepherd, to testify his care and love, sets his mark upon his sheep; and so does Christ. They are chosen by him, and have his image stampt upon them; whereby they are be-

come a peculiar people, diftinguished from the rest of the world, and noted to belong to Christ. Both he that fanctifieth, and they that are fanctified, are all of one, i. e. of one spiritual nature, as fome explain the words; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11.

5. It belongs to the office of a good shepherd to heal his sheep; and 'tis in order to heal and fave them, that Christ seeks out his. Healing supposes fickness and diseases; and how deplorable foever may be the cafe of any by nature, Christ has undertaken a perfect cure of them, and of all his ranfomed ones, and will not fail of prefenting them to the Father without fpot

or wrinkle, or any fuch thing.

6. A good shepherd takes care of his sheep; and upon this account, the title well belongs to Christ. In token of this, he wears their names on his heart, which was represented of old by the high priest's having the names of the tribes on his breaft-plate. Christ takes care for their instruction in the great things that concern their everlasting peace. Ministers, ordinances, and all the means of grace are proofs of this. He takes care that their wants be feafonably fupplied; prefents their persons and services to his Father, and pleads in their behalf, that both may be accepted. He manifests his care in watching over them, and in discovering and defeating the defigns of his and their enemies against them. Sheep are defenceless creatures, and would foon become a prey to dogs and wolves, were it not for the care and watchful-. 2

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ness of their shepherds; and Christ's care is equally necessary for the security of his little flock of believers.

7. A good shepherd guides his flock; and so does Christ, John x. 3, 4. He calleth bis own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him. He shews them the path of life, and leads them in it: his eye is never off from them, and his care for them is never laid afide.

8. A good shepherd provides for his flock; and so does Christ. None of his sheep shall die for want of food, John x. 9. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be faved, and shall go in and

out, and find pasture.

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Lastly, A good shepherd gives an account of his sheep; and so will Christ. Tho' he received a vast number of them from his Father to recover and guide, he will refign them to him again in full tale, and as perfected, faying, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me, Heb. ii. 13. This is the Father's will that fent him, that of all that he hath given him he should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day, John vi. 39.

So much for the first thing, how the title of

shepherd agrees to Christ.

II. Let us confider some of the characters that belong to him, as a shepherd.

And I. He is the Shepherd of fouls.

These precious immortal souls of ours are committed into his hand, to feek and fave them; and he is made perfect thro' fuffering to carry on the defign. This is he on whom the help of Z 2

our fouls was laid, without whose interposition, we had been left for ever to wander and perish. Happy they who have an interest in him, and to whom it can be faid, Ye were once as sheep going aftray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and bishop of your souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25.

2. He is that great shepherd of the sheep, Heb. xiii. 20. Great, in respect of the dignity of his person, and great in his accomplishments for his office; having all power in heaven and earth committed to him, that he may bring his flock into the kingdom of grace, and then preferve them in it, and train them up for glory.

3. He is the good shepherd, John x. 11. good eminently, fo that there is none to be compared

with him.

He is the very best shepherd.

(1.) As being most wife and discerning. He is acquainted with the state of his whole flock, and of every one belonging to it, and knows how to deal with all, as their different circum-

stances require.

(2.) He is fo, as being most faithful and constant. He is one who will not lay down; nor lessen his regard to his flock, nor intermit one moment his care and diligence about it. Other shepherds may not be always able, or willing to attend their charge: but Christ is always prefent, and always vigilant: he will never leave his flock, nor fuffer any belonging to it to be loft, or plucked out of his hand. And,

(3.) He is the best shepherd, in respect of love for his flock. This is the shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep, John x. 11. David, when

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a shepherd, went far in venturing his life for a Lamb of the flock: but Christ did not only venture his life, but laid it down. There was no way to fave the sheep given him, but by the death of the shepherd: and this he freely submitted to. No man could take his life from him, but he laid it down of himself.

Thus you fee what manner of shepherd

Christ is.

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III. What is implied in his feeding bis flock? This shews us, that Christ makes gracious provision for the nourishment, strength and comfort of his people in this world, preparatory to the happiness he designs to bring them to in another.

1. And here, as being the shepherd of his people's fouls, the food wherewith he feeds, is spiritual. Even our common supplies for the body are from him: but the renewed foul has an appetite peculiar to itself, which nothing in this world can fuit or fatisfy. As Chrift, while on earth, had meat to eat which the world knew not of; fo have his people too. 'Tis for their fouls, their better part, that Christ, as their shepherd, is chiefly concerned; and his provifion for fouls, is spiritual.

2. Of this spiritual food he makes use of

great variety.

(1.) He feeds his flock with his word and ordinances. These are the green pastures and still waters, of which the pfalmift speaks, Pfalm xxiii. 2. as what the Lord, as his shepherd, provided for him, and which have all along been the stated external means, by which nourishment

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has been conveyed to his flock, and whereby all belonging to it have been maintained, and made to grow. These are the things David so eagerly defired, Pfal. xlii. 1, 2. As the Hart panteth ofter the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. These he highly admires, and is eminently pleased with, Pfal. lxxxiv. 1. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! how fweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than boney to my mouth, Pfal. cxix. 103. And 'tis still the duty and temper of believers, as new born babes to defire the fincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, I Pet. ii. 2. The word and facraments, the ordinances and institutions which Christ has left with his church, are the things which he knows his flock need: and he requires their attendance upon them, as the ordinary means he will make use of for feeding their fouls. He could feed his flock without them; but ordinarily chuses to do it by them. Where two or three are met together in his name, he has graciously faid, There will I be in the midst of them. By these the souls of believers are warned, strengthened, quickened, comforted, and so nourished up for a higher state.

(2.) Christ feeds his flock by the influences of his spirit. This is the Redeemer's agent to go between him and the souls of his people, and apply the benefits he hath purchased for them, which are treasured up in him. Christ promifeth, John xvi. 14. He, i. e. the Spirit, Shall re-

ceive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

If the external ordinances are useful to the strengthening and comforting the foul, 'tis the special

fpecial presence and influence of the spirit of Christ that makes them so. Outward means have their virtue and influence from the spirit's influence: and by this Christ sometimes supplies the want of them, and even in a wilderness, where ordinary comforts cannot be had, he feeds his slock without them, by this manna rained from heaven.

(3.) Christ feeds his flock with himself, with his own slesh and blood as received by faith. By this he becomes intimately one with them, and they are quickened, nourished, and grow

up in him.

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This is a mystery which will be for ever such to those that are not of his flock. When the Jews, upon hearing this, according to their gross conception, asked, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? John vi. 52, &c. Jesus answered, verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. And, on the contrary, he said, Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, bath eternal life. The food is extraordinary, and so is the effect it hath on all that take it: For, faith Christ, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. No meat or drink in the world is to be compared to this, or that will nourish like it. And the reason of this is given, ver. 56. he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Christ himself is the food by which he feeds his flock. Seeing his flock ready to perish, and that there was no other way for their being saved, he gave himself for them; and he now,

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under

under the gospel, gives himself to them; and by grace communicated, in eating him spiritually, becomes in them the hope of glory.

(4.) Christ feeds his flock by the various dis-

pensations of his providence towards them.

His ways towards them are teaching and useful, John x. 9. I am the door, by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture. In every place, and thro' the feveral turns of life, matter of nourishment, strength and comfort, shall be afforded to every one that belongs to the flock: all

fuch shall go in and out, and find pasture.

(5.) When 'tis necessary, he feeds his flock by afflictions. This way is grievous to flesh and blood, and what it would gladly be exempted from; but he knows it needful, and can make it useful: he knows how to turn what is painful to the body, into wholesome nourishment for the foul. By fuch a course as this, he mortifies their corruptions, Ifa. xxvii. q. and improves their graces, Heb. xii. 11. tho' no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Laftly, After Christ has fed his flock for a time here, he will eternally feed and feast them with higher entertainments in heaven. The joys of the kingdom of glory, as well as of grace, are fet forth by a feast; and those that he has kindly entertained here, he will take up to fit down with him in the kingdom of his father. He is gone to prepare the feast, to make abaut

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ready the great marriage fupper of the lamb, for all the children of the kingdom, and by the provision he makes for them here below, he is preparing them for it: John x. 27, 28. I know them, i.e. my sheep, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life. What they here enjoy, is all but preparatory to greater and better things they shall have hereafter.

Thus, as to the matter of it, the food Christ

gives his sheep, is various.

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3. The food wherewith Christ feeds his flock, is precious, even the privileges and promifes of the gospel, the graces and consolations of his Spirit, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation and acceptance with God; provisions for their support and comfort by the way, and heaven to crown all in the end, &c. How costly, how precious, are such things as these! Precious in themselves; and what ought to render them most valuable in our esteem, is the price by which they were obtained, viz. the sufferings and death of the great shepherd, the man that was God's fellow, Zech. xiii. 7.

4. Christ feeds his people with pleasant food, the sweet influences of his Spirit. The ordinances of his gospel, and his presence vouch-safed in and under them, are pleasant now; but much more so, will be the joy with which he will feed and fill all his members at last, when he shall take them up to sit down with him in

his kingdom.

5. The provision Christ affords his flock is plentiful.

He fets open his unsearchable riches to them, and thus bespeaks them, Eat, O friends, drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved, Cant. v. 1.

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6. To say no more, The food with which Christ feeds his flock preserves from perishing, and nourishes the soul to eternal life: John vi. 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. And, says Christ, ver. 51. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.

IV. In what respect may Christ be said to

feed his flock like a shepherd?

1. As he feeds them with judgment and difcretion, with due regard to their age and growth. 2. As he doth this with the greatest care, tenderness and compassion, as those weak creatures he hath paid the greatest price for, and stands in the nearest relation to. 3. As he feeds them effectually, so as to make them to thrive. 4. As he will go on to feed them, till their strength and grace is perfected, and they are nourished up to a sitness for the glory he designs to bring them to.

Doct. 2. As Christ's flock is made up of believers of different attainments in grace, his carriage is suitable to every one of them: particularly, he regards, in the most compassionate manner, the weak and tender. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Let us

here diffinctly confider,

I. That Christ's flock is made up of believers of several growths and attainments in grace; of

The nineteenth Sermon. 347 of lambs, as well as more grown and strong sheep.

II. The instances here mentioned of his com-

paffionate regard to the weak.

III. That Christ will make good his character of a shepherd to every one of these, and whence this may be concluded.

I. Christ's flock is made up of believers of feveral growths; of lambs as well as more

grown sheep.

Some of Christ's flock are weak, others strong; some seeble and faint, others more lively, and in a better state. We read of fathers, and young men, and of little children, and babes in Christ, 1 John ii. 12, &c. These distinctions may respect the different ages of christians, some of all which God is pleased to recover; and they may respect too, the different statures of such as are recovered, or their growth in Christ.

1. As to the ages and years of christians, we read of Paul the aged, and of Mnason, an old disciple, Acts xxi. 16. and of others, the kindness of whose youth God particularly remembers. Josah, in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of David his father, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. And Obadiah was one that feared the Lord from his youth, 1 Kings xviii. 12. Samuel, when but a child, ministered before the Lord, 1 Sam. ii. 18. And Timothy from a child, is said to have known the scriptures. Christ hath his followers of every age, which are instances of God's power and grace, that brought them home to him.

And,

And, 2. In respect of stature, strength and growth in grace, Christ's flock is made up of lambs as well as sheep. Grace is not perfected as foon as implanted, nor does it thrive in all alike. Of the feed that fell upon good ground, the different produce is remarkable: In some it brought forth an hundred fold, in others fixty, in others but thirty. Grace, where it is true and real, is not in the same measure in all, nor equally flourishing and fruitful. Christians are of different fizes, who yet all belong to the fame head. They are not only distinguished from the rest of the world; but, as to strength and growth, from one another. God has ordered it thus for wife purposes; that the weak may be affifted by the strong, and the strong have opportunity of shewing their compassion and tenderness to the weak: that the strong may by this means be kept humble, as feeing in the case of others what they themselves once were; and that the weak may not be discouraged, but reach after the attainments of the strong; and, in the mean time, may be supported with the thought, that the lambs are part of the flock as well as the sheep, and such as the shepherd will own and manifest a particular regard and tenderness for.

But this leads us to confider,

II. The Inftances here mentioned of Christ's compassionate regard to the weak.

These are three.

1. The lambs when wandring, he will gather with his arm.

2. When

to

2. When unable to go, he will carry them in his bosom.

3. Such as are with young, or have newly yeaned, or give fuck, and so are weak, he will gently lead.

1. The lambs when wandring, he will gather

Gathering, on the part of our shepherd, supposes our proneness to wander and go astray. Sheep are noted for wandring; and this may too often be said even of Christ's sheep. While they are in their natural state, this sault in them is universal: All we like sheep have gone astray; gone so far astray as to be lost, and must have remain'd so for ever, had not Christ condescended to seek us, in order to save us. And even after he hath recovered us by his grace, and brought us into his slock, we have still our deviations; and, if lest to ourselves, how far should we wander, and in what danger should we be of falling a prey to the destroyer?

This proceeds,

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(1.) From the remains of corruption in us, and in his whole flock, which are not yet perfectly renewed. Tho' grace be implanted in the sheep of Christ, its opposite is not quite rooted out: though they are throughout sanctified, as to parts; yet none of 'em are perfectly so, as to degrees: in their understandings there is a mixture of darkness and ignorance; hence they have not always so clear a sense of their duty as they ought; and when they know what they ought to do, there is in their wills too great a disinclination to it; and moreover a law in the members

members warring against the law of the mind, and by the power that flesh and sense have with them, they are too often overcome and betrayed Carnal objects strike the senses, and stir the affections; and by these the mind is blinded, the will captivated, and the child of God drawn

from his duty.

(2.) The fuddenness and surprize of a temptation may fometimes occasion their going astray. Our adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour, and knows how to fet upon any of us, at the times when he is most likely to prevail. Thus Peter, when furprized, by that malicious enemy, went far aftray, even to the denial of his Lord three times over; but 'twas all in a hurry. And in like manner, many others, thro' a fudden and violent affault, have been overcome.

(3.) As making way for both these, christians too often let down their watch; upon which they are betrayed by corruption with, and Satan gets an advantage over them. The faints carnal fecurity is frequently the occasion of their going aftray: but notwithstanding this, Christ

will gather such with his arm.

Which implies,

(1.) That he looks after them, even when they are going aftray from him, and that his eye is upon them, and he concerned for them still.

(2.) That he will not let them wander too far, not beyond the reach of his arm, with which

they are both incircled, and restrained.

(3.) That he will imploy his power, when the case necessarily requires it, in order to their recovery.

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covery. By this he brought them into his sheepfold, and by it he gathers them afterwards when they have gone astray.

(4.) That he will gather them with gentleness and care. They must be setched in; and that he may do it in the most endearing manner, he

will do it with his own arm.

(5.) That he will gather them with his arm, i. e. with it stretched out kindly to receive them, and to give them a gracious welcome to him again. Tho' they ungratefully go astray from him, he calls to them, saying, Return ye backstiding children, and I will heal your backslidings: and upon their saying, behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God, he stands with open arms to encourage their hope of a gracious reception, fer. iii. 22.

Tho' the approaches of the returning foul to him be made with much weakness and confusion, under a sense of its vileness and unworthiness, his arm is stretched out, not to give a repulse, but to entertain them, as being mindful of his own promise, him that cometh to me, I

will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37.

2. He will carry them in his bosom. This implies great weakness in some that belong to Christ's flock, and great compassion and grace

on the part of him, their shepherd.

Some that belong to Christ's flock, are very feeble and weak. And their weakness in grace occasions their wandring or going astray, and that again weakens their grace the more.

to knowledge, faith and love.

The light in many of their minds, tho' faving, yet how small and obscure is it? how little extensive; so that they are ready to be staggered at every doctrinal difficulty, and to ask with Nicodemus, how can these things be? John iii. 9.

How weak are many as to their faith? And, as the effect of this, how low is their comfort? They receive Christ, but with a trembling hand: they belong to him, but are filled with a thoufand doubts and fears concerning it; and upon account of these, they are bowed down, and go

mourning from day to day. The name day about

In a word, how weak in many of them is the very principle of the new and spiritual life they have received? Their souls are really quickened and made alive by grace; but how low are their attainments, and improvements? how heavily do they move in the ways of God? How sew and cold their thoughts of heaven, and seldom of influence to raise or resresh their souls in the way to it? Such weaklings as these Christ has in his slock; and yet he does not cast them off, but carries them in his bosom; which notes,

(1.) That he observes with compassion the very weakest in his slock, and has his heart, as well as his arms open, to softer and cherish them. He knows, grace at first is but as a grain of mustard seed, and does not expect to find it in its strength and persection, as soon as it is sown.

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He is witness to all the tears and complaints of the lambs of his flock, by reason of their weakness; and instead of disowning and casting them out of his fold, takes them into his bosom, have very heavy burde

as a place of pity.

(2.) It notes that he will take them into a place of fafety. As being weak and defenceless in themselves, they are full of fears what will become of them, because of the danger they are in from their grand adversary, who seeks their ruin: and to quiet them as to these, he will carry them in his bosom; from whence they shall never be cast out by himself, nor shall any come at them there, mortally to touch them. And where can the weak but fincere believer wish to be, more to his fatisfaction? Where more likely to be guarded from what he fears, and attain what he wants? Is grace then little and low? Here it shall be preserved, here it shall be cherished, and not fail of reaching the perfect stature to which it is defigned.

(3.) In a word, Christ's carrying the weak of his flock in his bosom, notes his acceptance of them as fincere, notwithstanding the weaknesses they lament over. These shall not keep them out of his bosom, and from his heart. In token of his well pleasedness with them as their hearts are upright with him, he lays them next

his own.

3. Our Lord and Shepherd Jesus Christ will

gently lead those that are with young.

These words may set forth the condition and state of such sheep and followers of him as are forely burdened, and fo weak: and the leading

Vol. I. them

them on gently on Christ's part, denotes the need of it on theirs, as being apt to faint and die away, if not compassionately led, and often relieved. Some that belong to Christ's flock have very heavy burdens to bear. We, faith the Apostle, that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened. And there are many things to burden Christ's sheep, as their difficult services, the load of their unmortified fins, and the bitter fruits of them, in their various fufferings, outward and inward, of body and mind.

As pressed with these, some of Christ's slock may be faid to be as feeble and faint as sheep that are with young, or give fuck: but fuch be

will gently lead. Which implies,

(1.) That he will go before them in the way they are to take. When he putteth forth his fheep, weak and faint as they are, he does not leave them alone; but goes before them, marking out the way in which they are to walk, and shewing them the path of life. In the multitude of their thoughts with them, how they shall find their way to heaven, and get up out of this wilderness; to remove the ground of their perplexity, he will go before them and lead them.

(2.) He will lead them gently on, and not hurry and try them by any means, beyond their

strength.

(3.) He will bear with all their weakness and imperfections, groans and complaints, and never take occasion from thence to be severe with them, or forfake and leave them. No; tho' they grow faint and feeble, and ready to be kee WC

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an m be impatient, he will abide with them, and keep them company all their way thro' this wor'd, and at last receive them fafe to glory on

III. Christ will make good his character of a shepherd to those his sheep that are weak, either thro' their small attainments in grace, or

the greatness of their burdens, who so someone

ther the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. And 'tis elsewhere confirmed, A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoaking slax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory, Matt. xii. 20.

2. To this his compassionate nature inclines him; as we have not in him an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our insirmities; but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, Heb. iv. 15. Such a nature can't but be peculiarly concerned for the weaklings of his flock, whose groans are continually going to heaven.

3. This he has in his commission. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, &c. Isa.

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4. This has all along been his dealing with his flock; and he is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

heaven, call me to c

APPLICATION.

Will Christ gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom? What an inducement is this to come into his flock? And if you

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have

have good hope that you are come into it, lef the character of the great shepherd keep you from finking, how weak soever you are.

Be humbled, that you should be such weaklings as you are, fo apt to wander, and fo unable to return: but yet, remember the excellent properties of Christ as the shepherd of his flock, and the promises he has made to them, and plead them with him. Say, " Lord, I am "weak, do thou strengthen me: I have wan-" dered and fallen, and wounded my foul, O " do thou pity, recover and heal me: I am one " of the weakest in thy flock; but yet I trust " I have chosen thee for my shepherd; and if " I am not fed, strengthened, and healed by " thee, I must faint and perish. I own myself " unworthy of thy care and conduct; but as " thou wilt be conceived of, as touched with " the tenderest compassion, I cast myself upon " thee. O forgive, forgive my past wandrings, " and pity me under my present weakness: do " not reject or cast me off, who desire no greater " happiness than to belong to thy fold. Set thy " mark upon me, let my wants be supplied from "thee, my doubts and fears scattered, my " likeness to thee promoted: and when best

" prepared for heaven, call me to adore thy grace, and behold thy glory there." Amen and Amen.

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SERMON XX.

PROV. XVIII. 14.

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

TN these words we may taken notice,

1. Of the subject spoken of, the spirit, or

the foul of man.

2. Of the condition this spirit may be in: it may be either found, or wounded. The word found, is not expressly added to spirit in the first words of the text; but it is implied, as may be

concluded from the latter words of it.

3. Of what is faid of it, as confidered both in the one and the other case and condition. The spirit of a man, when sound, will sustain his instrmities: but, on the contrary, when it is wounded who can bear it? so disquieting it is, that the man is not to be found that can have any composure under, or strength against outward afflictions, who is left by himself to labour under them.

Accordingly, two things deserve our observa-

tion.

I. That a found spirit is what will relieve under

outward infirmities and troubles. And,

II. That a wounded spirit, is itself a burden, under which there is no standing without relief given from heaven.

I. A found spirit is what will relieve under

outward infirmities and troubles.

Under this, my endeavour shall be to shew,

I. When the spirit of a man may be said to be found, and so, sit to sustain his infirmity.

II. That every man has bis infirmities, and that those whose spirits are found, are liable

to many external troubles.

III. How far a found spirit will sustain them under these.

I. When may the spirit be faid to be found?

I answer,

The spirit of a man, the sound one in oppofition to the wounded one, and which suffaineth his infirmities, is a soul renewed by the spirit of God, pardoned thro' the blood of Christ, and in some measure, comforted with a sense of God's

love, and its own fafety for eternity.

1. A spirit found and fit to fustain a man's infirmity, is one renewed and sanctified by the spirit of God. An holy soul is a healthful one. Had man continued innocent, supposing he had been put to suffer, his innocency would have kept him from sinking and repining: no trial from without would have overwhelmed his spirit throughout pure and heavenly. But man as fallen into sin, and under the power of corruption, is become weak and impotent, both to do what

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is required of him, and to bear what may be laid upon him. 'Tis true, that in men unrenewed by the grace of God, there may be a twofold foundness of spirit, by which 'tis not easy to imagine how much some of them will bear.

(1.) There is a natural foundness or stoutness of spirit, which is not easily discouraged or broken by external trouble or pain. This is a qualification with which some are born, and which, through the strength of their constitutions, they may long retain, and by it endure much before

they'll complain.

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(2.) There is a moral foundness of spirit: This is found when and where conscience commonly enlightened hath nothing gross to upbraid the man withal; but on the contrary, witnesses to his care and diligence about the external practice of many virtues, which are amiable and excellent in themselves. This men are apt to value themselves upon; and from the pleafing reflections they make upon it, may have their spirits so raised, as to sustain and bear up under a great degree of external trouble and pain, without feeming to droop or fink. 'Tis strange with what firmness of temper many of the Heathens would bear evil, from a natural together with the addition of somewhat of moral foundness of spirit.

But the found spirit of a child of God is something superiour to both: 'tis a soul created a-new after God's image, freed from the power and sway of corruption, united to Christ, and called into fellowship with him; and so one surnished with strength and grace from him,

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for taking up any cross his Lord shall appoint, and for following him without fainting, till he reacheth the crown. Natural and moral soundness of spirit are not to be disvalued: but 'tis the soundness of the soul as renewed, which is its strength, and the thing that tends to keep it from fainting in a day of trouble. Natural courage may be borne down; support setched from the fairest external behaviour may prove seeble: therefore without the participation of the divine nature, that soundness is wanting which is essential to support and sustain aright under

fufferings.

2. A spirit found to sustain infirmity, is one pardoned through the blood of Jesus, and thro' him restored to the favour of God. Unpardoned fin is the sting of every affliction, and that which lies with a finking weight upon us, which while it is felt, is apprehended to be the beginning of forrows, and the earnest of the wrath to come, which fin deserves. Being exposed naked and defenceless to that wrath, how can the finner's hands endure, or his heart be strong, when God comes and deals with him? How hard is it to bear up under present sufferings, when they are taken to be the fad forerunners of eternal torment? But when fin is pardoned, and thereby the foul freed from going down into the pit; when it is interested in the favour of God as a Father, and however tried, yet is remembered of him, beloved by him, and dear to him still, this makes all outward fufferings light, and removes the greatest ground of dejection and complaint, Isaiab xxxiii, 24. The

The inhabitants shall not say I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

Forgiving iniquity is, in effect, a healing of all our diseases, or at least a preparation of the foul to fustain them, as being inconsiderable in comparison of the evil from which he is discharged. Hence the Pfalmist makes special mention of it in his thanksgiving, Pfal. ciii. 1, &c. Bless the Lord, O my foul: and all that is within me, blefs his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. Bleffed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, Pfal. xxxii. 1, 2. This makes a spirit sound indeed, its having redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of fin: and so whatever those that are thus privileged fuffer, they have no reafon to fink; being chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world.

3. A found spirit is one that being already renewed and forgiven, is in some measure comforted with a sense of God's love, and its own safety for eternity; is one which being justified by faith, hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also it hath access by faith into that grace wherein it stands, and rejoiceth in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 1, 2, and this prepares it to glory in tribulation,

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A faint fealed by the Spirit of God unto the day of redemption; one brought into the houfhold of faith, and so put among the children and heirs of God; one upon whom the light of God's countenance is lifted up, and in whose heart the sense of his peculiar love is shed abroad; one born from heaven, begotten to a lively hope of an inheritance there, and able to apply the promise to himself, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, as one of the happy number, &c. This is the person that hath a spirit that will sustain him under his infirmity.

I shall proceed to the

IId. General, viz. To shew, that every man has bis infirmity; and that those whose spirits are found, are liable to many external troubles.

1. Every man has his infirmity of one kind or other. We are all conceived and born in fin, and fo brought forth to forrow of one kind or another fince the fall, as the sparks fly upward. And as afflictions do not spring out of the ground, nor come by chance, but according to the wife and just will of God, he has the ordering of all that every one fuffers, of what burdens he shall bear, and how far, and how long. Every man's times are in his hand; those of prosperity, and those of affliction and trial: and they are made to fucceed each other as he pleafes.

2. Those whose spirits are sound, are liable to external trouble. Sin in the world, and in its remains upon the foul, tells the Christian that his perfect rest is not to be on this side heaven. Our Lord Jesus flattered none of his fol-

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lowers, but plainly told them, that they must stay for their best things till last: and so the first lesson in his school, is self-denial. If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me. And throughout their course in walking after him, he tells them, that in the world they should have trouble; and that, thro' much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God.

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They are liable to be tried, and may be call'd to fuffer more ways than can be reckoned up: for many are the afflictions of the righteous.

This Term infirmity here used, denotes what afflictions are, both in their nature and tendency, viz. weakening things. Sickness and pain weaken the body: crosses and trials weaken and waste the man. This shews him weak, that he is fubject to them; and ftrong and repeated ftrokes of them, and long continuance under them, makes him feel himself so. When God with rebukes does chasten man, he maketh his beauty to confume away like a moth fretting a garment. Man has no ability to prevent their . coming, nor to free himself from them when come: nor without help from heaven, can he stand under them. That the spirit of a child of God bears up under the rod better than another, is owing to the happy change made by grace therein, and to his affistance from above.

But this brings to the

III Thing, How far a found spirit will su-

stain a man under external suffering.

'Tis not to be supposed that he hereby becomes insensible. He feels as well as others when he

is pained and afflicted, and feels it true, that no chastening is for the present joyous, but griev-

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ous, Heb. xii. 11. But,

1. A found spirit will be a praying one. No trial upon earth shall keep it from sending to heaven for help: And the sorer the distress, the more frequent and servent will be its applications to the Father of spirits, and the Father of mercies there.

2. A found spirit under outward affliction, will not let go its hope in God of a blessed issue, either in this world, or a better. Something like this will be its language, Pfal. xlii. 11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. All is well that ends well; and as to the present trial, tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

3. A found spirit will sustain under outward infirmity with something of chearfulness, while it is, itself, untouched. Heaven open, and the light of God's countenance listed up, will be the spring of inward comfort and joy, under the most gloomy prospect from without. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no berd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

A found spirit thus fustains a man's infirmity,

1. As under any trouble 'tis its next and stated course to run to God, and spread its case before him.

The throne of grace is fet up on purpose for this, and the believer hath a new and living way to come to it, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2. As this spirit is not alone, but has the Spirit of God with it, whose name and office is the Comforter; and he proves himself so, by leading the afflicted christian into an acquaintance with what is written in the word, and what has

been wrought within himself.

(1.) With what is written in the word tending to his fupport: as, that fuch as have been dear to God have been afflicted by him, as David, Job, and multitudes that are gone before him to heaven: as, that to be afflicted, is not inconfiftent with a special relation to God, and an interest in his love; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; and all things shall work together for good to them that love God; and the light afflictions that are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Such promifes and declarations as these, and an interest in them seasonably discovered by light from heaven, holds up the foul under any outward burden.

(2.) The Spirit leads the afflicted christian into an acquaintance with what is wrought within, the truth and greatness, excellency and advantage of the change made there, whereby he hath ballance enough against all the afflictions appointed to him, were they much heavier than they are, or much longer than they are like to be.

Upon

Upon fuch grounds as thefe, the Spirit of a man, as fet right with God, and comforted by him, will fustain his infirmity, and bear him up under any external burden. To amit ni glad

I now go on to the

II. Thing observed, namely, That a wounded spirit is itself a burden, under which there is no

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standing without relief from beaven.

'Tis therefore put by way of interrogation, who can bear it? which carries its own answer. viz. that the man is not to be found that would not fink under a wounded spirit, unless held up by a higher hand.

Here we may confider,

I. That the spirit or soul in man may be wounded.

II. When, or in whom it may be fo wounded as to become a burden most grievous to be borne: The confideration of which, will make way for the Use.

I. 'Tis here supposed, that the spirit or soul

in man may be wounded.

There is fuch a thing as a grieved foul, as well as there is a pained body; anguish affecting the inward man, as well as difeases and calamities the outward. My beart, faith David, is wounded within me, Pfal.cix. 22. And there have been, and are others fince him, who know by feeling, that a wounded spirit is more than a name. There is a bitterness peculiar to the heart, which can only be understood by God, and itfelf. Sometimes both foul and body may be afflicted together; and fometimes when the body, to appearance, may be in the best state,

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V ch the spirit may be wounded and bleeding with-

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A wounded spirit is one filled with anguish from a sense of sin, and the dreadful apprehensions of wrath deserved for committing it.

II. To consider when, or in whom, as the subjects of it, the spirit may be wounded. The spirit may be wounded in men, either before conversion, in such of them as the Spirit of God is about to recover to God; or after their conversion, in such as are recovered, and become children of God.

We shall now only consider the wounded spirit which those labour under before their conversion, whom the Spirit of God is about to recover to God. The spirit in man is wounded when the Spirit of God comes to convince him of fin, and rescue him from it. This it does, by laying open what is written in the word, namely, The foul that fins shall die, the wages of fin is death; He that believeth not, is condemned already, &c. By fuch awful passages, the holy Spirit awakens the conscience to apply them to the finner himself, by faying, Thou art the man that hast finned against God, and art by nature and practice a child of wrath: and the wages of fin is death, which is what thou hast to expect. And hereby the mind is awakened, and made to meditate terror, from a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adverfary.

The foul, through inward anguish, and distress, is brought into some such case as that of the jaylor, when he came trembling to Paul and Silas, faying, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?

Acts xvi. 30.

The fentence of a broken law fet home upon conscience, is like the hand-writing to Belshazzar, loosing the joints of his loins, and making

his knees fmite one against another.

How light soever the sinner could make of wrath and condemnation before this, he can now do so no longer, when considering it as the wrath of an infinite God, and when conscience frequently asks him, How can thy heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that God shall deal with thee? Ezek. xxii. 14. How fearful a thing is it to fall into the hand of the living God? Who knows the power of his anger? Who can dwell with devouring sire? Who can endure everlasting burnings?

How fad doth the finner find it to look back to a life spent in fin? How fearful to look forward to the wrath treasured up against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous

judgment of God?

How amazingly sad, saith the sinner within himself, must it be to have treasures of wrath laid up in store against me? to be condemned already, and have the wrath of God abiding on me? To eat and drink under wrath? buy and sell, lie down and rise up, and all under wrath? To be upon the brink of eternity, having no more than a breath between my soul, and the place of torment, where the wrath of God is poured out without mixture? How terrible is this?

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All the comforts of life are imbittered to him, from the dreadful apprehension of what is to follow. As a man condemned can't put the expected execution out of his thoughts; much less can a soul awakened to apprehend his being under a far worse condemnation, forbear to think of it, even of his standing sentenced to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his pow-

er, 2 Theff. i. q.

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This makes him eat ashes with his bread, and causes him to mingle his drink with tears: this makes his life abhor bread, and his foul dainty meat: thro' this he taftes no fweetness in any comforts, but they all become to him tafteless, as Job speaks, like the white of an egg. His words are swallowed up; his sleep departs from him, or is interrupted with fcaring visions, and terrifying dreams. Speak to him of mirth, 'tis all madness: try to divert him with all that before he took pleasure in; unless you can speak of a pardon, he is in the case of the Israelites under their hard bondage in Egypt, not able to bearken, for anguish of spirit, Exod. vi. 9. A wounded spirit is one so sensible of sin, and of deserved wrath for it, as to fink into despair of all relief from any thing, but the infinite mercy of God, and the blood of Christ.

The man under such a spirit, looks on his right hand, and refuge fails; and on his lest, and no help appears. As lost and liable to perish, there is no other name under heaven given among men, but that of Jesus Christ, by which

the finner can be faved.

Vol. I. Bb Thus

Thus God concludes all under fin, upon whom he will have mery, wounding them in order to to heal them.

Awakening providences fanctified, are of use to this; but the ordinary instrument in the hand

of the Spirit, is the word.

In this the finner has the light of God shining before him, shewing him the precepts he has broken the threatnings he has brought himfelf under; and how impossible it is, that he should escape by any merit or strength of his own.

The reasons of this distress are such as these.

1. That Christ may be rendered precious and amiable to the foul, and bring it to close with him upon his own terms. They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are fick. Necessity endears any thing to us; and the greater the necessity, the more welcome the hand that relieves it. It is our necessity that puts us upon looking out after a Saviour, and relying upon him, as the only one on whom our help is laid.

2. The spirit is wounded to fill the recovered foul with the greater hatred of fin, the procuring cause of all the anguish it feels, and to make him, as long as he lives, more watchful

against it.

3. The spirit is wounded under a sense of sin, that when it is healed it may be the more enlarged in thankfulness towards its gracious God. Deliverance from evil is a motive to praise. David frequently enlargeth upon this, Pfal. xviii. 5. and Psal. cxvi. 3, 4, 5, 6. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon

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al tl upon me; I found trouble and forrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I befeech thee deliver my foul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea our God is merciful. I was brought low, and he helped me. Vers. 12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? What return can be answerable to so great a mercy?

How thankful will a condemned man be for a pardon? and how much more engaging should forgiveness be to a sinner that has felt the weight of his guilt, and hath, as it were, been shaken

over the bottomless pit?

4. The diftress of a wounded spirit will for ever be an argument of love to God and Christ, from a sense of their love that pitied and kept it from sinking under the pressing burden, and at length delivered it from the wrath to come, and the present tormenting sear of it, which was

even hell begun.

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5. The spirit is thus deeply wounded in such as God is pleased to recover from their lost e-state, to put others upon considering what they are liable to suffer upon the account of sin in this world, besides the death which is the wages of it in another. It may easily be inferred, that most dreadful torments are reserved for unconverted sinners in the next world, from what many a soul undergoes, when awakened and made sensible of it in order to its conversion, while in this present one.

6. The spirit is wounded in such as God is about to recover to himself, to make and keep them humble all their days. How little reason

will he have for pride, who remembers how near he once thought himself to hell, and how ready he was to drop into it?

7. This lays a foundation for pity and tender-

ness to others in the like case.

8. By the diffress that goes before recovering grace, God will encourage his people's trust in him in after-trials; as they can't forget how much better he was to them than their fears; and though he brought them into a wilderness, he there spake comfortably even to their hearts,

APPLICATION.

1. Is a wounded spirit so grievous a burden? How great is the evil of fin that procures it, and what folly is it in any that are told of this, to make a mock of it, and fecurely venture upon it?

2. How unconceivable will be the future torment of those who live and die under guilt unpardoned? If the mouth of the fiery furnace be fo hot, what will the furnace itself be? If a wounded conscience be so painful, what will it be, for ever to feel the gnawings of the worm that dieth not, and the fury of the fire that is not quenched?

3. What compassion is due to such as know by experience the insupportable burden of a wounded spirit, who in the bitterness of their fouls make 'fob's complaint their own, Pity me, pity me, O my friends, for the band of the Lord

bath touched me!

4. Seeing a wounded spirit is so hard to bear, what good news is it that Jesus Christ is appointed to cure it, and that he has done this for thou-

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fands, and is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever? You that are in this case, hear him calling to you, as it were by name, Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Matt. xi. 28. You have no need to look any where else. Help is laid for you on one that is mighty to save, and made perfect through suffering for that end. 'Tis the office with which he is cloathed, and on which he attends.

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Bless God, that as you need a physician, you have one provided: without whose help none can be recovered, and by it, the farthest gone, need not despond. Think not your case hopeless, nor be discouraged from applying to him, how sad soever it may be. Question not his power, nor distrust his grace. In a perswasion of both, cast yourselves upon him, to heal your broken hearts, and bind up all your wounds. And may you be instances of his faithfulness to his word, him that cometh to me, 1 will in no wife cast out, John vi. 37.

SERMON XXI.

2 COR. XII. 9.

---- My grace is sufficient for thee.

HE apostle Paul having been caught up into the third heaven, where he had heard unspeakable words, tells us what happened to him after his coming back, verse 7. and lest, saith he, I should be exalted above measure thro the abundance of the revelations, there was given me, &c. the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Whatever Satan designs, and God's children may be left to seel from him, it is to prevent a greater evil, and to do them good, that their heavenly Father suffers them to be tempted and

attacked by this evil fpirit.

This being now the Apostle's case to be sharply tempted by Satan, he tells us, what was his method of defence against his assaults, ver. 8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. Under all assaults from hell, God's saints are to fend up their cries to heaven.

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heaven, where he liveth who hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, and triumphed over them in his cross, Col. ii. 15. And in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18. And though they are not presently freed from Satan's onsets, they have no reason to grow impatient, or to faint; but the more reason to continue to pray and wait, and never to desist, till they have an answer of peace.

Thus the apostle behaved, and he tells us the happy success of his perseverance in praying, ver. 9. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

In which words we may take notice.

I. Of the person speaking, the Lord, i. e. the Lord Jesus Christ, our gloristed Redeemer, who is passed into the heavens to appear in the presence of God for us; and who here calls down from his throne to his servant now upon his knees, as being always ready to hear and help: For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our insirmities, Heb.

iv. 15, 16, &c.

2. Of the matter of his speech to this apostle, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness: wherein he does not presently satisfy his importunity, in removing the temptation from him, but lays a soundation for patience and trust during his trial, by declaring to him, my grace is sufficient for thee: and then he adds, as a reason of his dealing this way with his servant kneeling and praying for his

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immediate help, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. And what was here spoken to Paul, carries in it instruction and comfort to all the faithful, and is applicable by them in times of need.

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Promises made to some of God's people upon a particular occasion, are of general use, and what they are all concerned in, and have warrant to fetch encouragement from, according to the exigence of their own cases. This is evident from the promise made to Joshua, when he was to take upon him the command of the Ifraelites, to lead them into Canaan, and fight the Lord's battles. God faith unto him, Josh. i. 5. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forfake thee: Which the apostle improves as an argument against covetousness and finful fear of want, and a ground of contentment to a christian in every state, Heb. xiii. 5. For he bath faid, I will never leave thee, nor for fake thee; and adds, fo that we may boldly fay, i. e. in the language the Pfalmist was wont to speak, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me, Pfal. lvi: 4, 11. exviir. 6.

All that stand in the same relation to God, have an interest in the same love. His children that live now, are as dear to him as such ever were; and so will all that become such be, to the end of the world. They are all within the same covenant, Asts ii. 39. and have the same Redeemer Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours, I Cor. i. 2, 3. in whom all the promises are year and

and amen, and can never fail; and of which, believers by a like precious faith, are all heirs; fo that what belongs to one, concerns the rest. And the gracious answer here given the apostle, when praying to be delivered from Satan's temptation, yields support to every individual in the houshold of faith; and every one of them, when beseeching him, as this apostle did, may apprehend Christ speaking to him, under the sorest and longest trial, saying, My grace is sufficient for thee.

The doctrinal Observation I shall make from

these words, is this.

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Tho', for wise ends, God may suffer his people to be buffeted by Satan, and not presently answer their importunity, in setting them free; yet they may rest upon it, that his grace shall be sufficient for them.

In speaking to this, with an eye to the case of such as may be harrassed with Satan's tempta-

tions, I shall shew,

I. That 'tis no unprefidented thing for the people of God to be buffeted by Satan.

II. Whence it is God may permit this, and that to a fore degree, and for a very long time together, notwithstanding their earnest and repeated prayers to him for deliverance.

III. Upon what grounds they may conclude, his grace is sufficient for them, and how far it is so:

And then direct those that are tempted, what use to make of the whole in their distress.

I. 'Tis

I. 'Tis no unpresidented thing for the people

of God to be buffeted by Satan.

We fee that this was the apostle's case, who was a chosen vessel unto Jesus Christ, as it has been the lot of others of the faithful; and is what none can promise themselves security from. And how much did Job suffer from that malicious Spirit? And we read, he defired to have Simon Peter, that he might fift him as wheat, Luke xxii. 31. And we are told how terribly he was shaken, though he was afterwards recovered, Christ having prayed for him, that his faith might not fail. And when he was converted, Christ bids him strengthen his brethren, ver. 32. 'Tis to faints that he gives the exhortation, Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, feeking whom he may devour. Whom refift stedfast in the faith; and adds for their support, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world, I Pet. v. 8, 9. 'Tis as if he should say, your case is not fingular, nor danger insuperable. You need not think your trial strange, and upon that account fink under it: 'Tis no more, no other than your fellow-christians have experienced, or are liable to, all the world over. Satan traverseth the earth, and you while remaining in it, may expect to meet with him. This is the field of battle, where fighting will be much of your work; but though it is common to all while they are here, 'twill reach them no farther.

The captain of our falvation could not pass through this world free, but was affaulted with the the who life, furr be life beli

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the greatest violence by this Prince of darkness, whom he fignally overcame in the time of his life, Matt. iv. And after his death and refurrection, when he ascended up on high, then be led captivity captive, Eph. iv. 8. and is now fet down on the right-hand of God. And every believer is to fight his way upward after him to glory, under the encouragement of his promife, To him that overcometh will I grant to fit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am fet down with my Father in his throne, Rev. iii. 21.

The apostle calls upon the believing Ephesians to put on the whole armour of God, that they might be able to fland against the wiles of the Devil. And to shew that what he speaks to them, concerns all others, he adds, for we, i.e. you, and I, and all the followers of Christ, wrestle not against sless and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, or as some understand this last phrase, about the highest prize, even the heavenly glory, that we may not be deprived of it, Eph. vi. 11, 12. Wherefore the apostle repeats his advice, verf. 13. Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

The christian's life is a continual conflict, and from his new birth, it may be faid to every faint, as the prophet faid to Asa, from benceforth thou shalt have wars, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

All that come to Christ, break out from under the tyranny of Satan, and take the field against

against him and his powers; and like as the Ifraelites, after their marching out of Egypt, met with many enemies, trials and temptations, till they were fettled in the promised land: So do they, in their journey through this world; and till they get from hence to heaven, are all engaged in the fame combats, and have the fame enemies; and these numerous, powerful, strongly combined, malicious, fubtle, and unwearied; and no ground on this fide heaven, is privileged from their hellish attempts.

A faint, as fuch, is the object of the Devil's rage, and he is an enemy, who, as far as he is permited, will always vex and molest; and, how many ways has he to do it, mediate and immediate? by temptations from the world, the flesh, and from himself? by outward afflictions and persecutions, and inward fuggestion, &c. We read of his wiles, and of his fiery darts; and the people of God have experience of both. Those he cannot betray, as the old ferpent, he will

feek to devour, as the roaring lion.

His implacable hatred of God, and his image on his Saints, his envy at their happiness, his regret that they have escaped his dominion and leffened his kingdom, are the eternal springs of his war with them: which, till he cease to be a Devil, or they are removed beyond his reach,

he will not fail to maintain.

And though, on this account, the whole time of a christian's abode upon earth, may be faid to be a conflict with the powers of darkness; yet there are some seasons that may especially be called, their bour: wherein their rage is more

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cruel, and the impressions of it more dreadful, the battle more hot, the struggle greater, and the combat closer, and in which the iffue feems to them to be doubtful. And what does not the poor foul feel and fear in fuch an hour? especially when repeated applications are made to heaven, and no deliverance comes from thence. Oh the concern of the faint in fuch a feafon!

But this brings us to confider,

II. Whence it is that God may suffer his fervants to be buffeted by Satan, and to a fore degree, and for a long time together, notwithstanding their earnest and repeated prayers put up to him for deliverance.

Now this may feem strange, considering these

things.

- 1. How grievous it is to a faint, to be haunted by that hellish spirit, God's enemy and theirs, and to have their fouls wounded by his horrid fuggestions, and their purity endangered by his hated folicitations to fall into fin: to fall into it, let me fay, fometimes in fuch a manner as they tremble to think of; against that God whom they dearly love, and to whom they are infinitely obliged; whose favour they value above all the world, and fear to lose more than their lives?
- 2. And confidering how grievous it is to them, that the longer they are exposed to the affaults of this their adversary, the bolder he grows; for thereupon their fears are increased of being at length overcome, and that they shall one day fall a prey to this prince of darkness, who has all the qualifications that can make an enemy

dreadful:

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dreadful: as for example, to reckon up some them.

(1.) Implacable enmity, levelled against all mankind; but especially against the ransomed of the Lord, as they are upon their way to possess those mansions of glory, from which he and his

angels are fallen, and can never regain.

(2.) Deep subtilty, and this joined to long experience; he having numberless hidden arts and devices whereby to attempt the ruin of souls, and to know how to suit and manage them, so as that they may be most likely to prevail,

(3.) Infatiable cruelty; he aiming at no less

than their everlasting perdition.

(4.) Unwearied activity; he going about, feeking, by all possible ways, whom he may devour, and making this his constant work. Now being sensible they are no match for such an enemy themselves, and when crying to heaven for help, from whence only it can come, how is it that the saints are no sooner delivered?

And confidering (3dly,) That God knows their danger and diffress, and bears a peculiar affection to them; that they are his children, and he their Father, and pities them as such: why then will he look on, and see them strive, and hear them groan, and yet delay so long, to set them free?

Lastly, And considering, that the tempter makes advantage of this, to shake their faith as to his promises, and brings them to question his providence, and to distrust his power, or his goodness, and to doubt of their relation to him and interest in him; by telling them, 'tis too late

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late or in vain any more to feek and expect deliverance from him: that he will never answer or regard their prayers, but has finally rejected and cast them off, and that nothing remains for them, but to abandon themselves to despair and die.

But notwithstanding this, 'tis to be set down for a firm conclusion, God does all things well. And how grievous soever it may seem, 'tis not without reason, that God sometimes permits his

people to be buffeted by Satan. For,

or to mortify it, if it hath got place in them: fo hateful is this to God, and fo dangerous to themselves; and yet they are so apt to give way to it, after the most intimate acquaintance with him, that their heavenly Father sees good sometimes, even by the hand of Satan, the prince of the children of pride, to save them from its taint and ill effects.

When God's children have been eminently favoured by him, they are not out of danger of this; and therefore, the same love that lifted them up, fees it needful fometimes, to cast them down This the apostle gives as the reason of the change made in his condition; and that it might be the more regarded, begins and closes his relation with it: Left, (faith he) I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. The comforts of saints upon earth need an alloy: and that this may be effectual to keep their hearts from swelling from their gracious vouchsafements, a buffeting mesfenger

fenger of Satan shall be employed to prevent it. The Devil, who himself fell by pride, the wisdom of the Most High may make serviceable to cure it in his chosen among men, and may make even hell, in that respect, instrumental to help them to heaven.

2. God sometimes, and I am apt to say, often suffers this to befal his people, to correct them for their sins, and make them more careful in watching over their hearts and ways. Where Satan's painful and tedious buffets are felt, 'tis usually where his temptations to fin have been before entertained.

If we leave the passes of the soul unguarded against his cunning infinuations, so that they easily enter, or leave our inordinate passions and carnal affections to break out, we hereby give place to the Devil, and even meet him, to give him welcome, and provoke God to leave us in his hand, to make havock in our souls in point of comfort; upon which, he had before prevailed, to draw them to sin, to the obscuring and weakening of their graces.

If we grow careless in God's ways, or go out of them, it is no wonder if Satan finds us, and meets us, and sets upon us, and terribly convinces us of the necessity of keeping up our watch, and keeping close to God; of the necessity of praying down God's grace, and regarding the words of his lips, as ever we would shun the path of the destroyer; and shews us, how surely they prepare for their own forrows, who are faulty as to any of these.

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Pharoah was not more defirous to bring back the Israelites into bondage, or more eager in purfuing after them, to bring them back into it, than our adversary the Devil is to recover any foul, that is taken as a prey out of his hand.

And if, instead of vigilance against him, we fearlesly and carelesly hearken and yield to him, and venture on fin, we thereby forfeit the divine protection, and God may leave us for a time to experience, in a more than ordinary degree, his malicious power against our purity, peace, and eternal fafety: and the longer or farther we follow him in fin, the greater may be our trouble, and of longer continuance: God ordering it thus, to teach us, how evil and bitter a thing it is, in any inftance to decline or go aftray from him; and to quicken us to double our watch against it, from experience of what our fouls may endure, before they can be restored to the

joy of his falvation.

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3. God fuffers his people to be buffeted by Satan, for the trial of their graces, to evidence their fincerity, and so to provide for their comfort; or to discover their weaknesses, and so to take down their ungrounded confidences of them, and in them. The former was the reafon of 'fob's fufferings. God gives this testimony concerning him. That he was a perfect and an upright man; but Satan who is the accuser of the brethren, condemned him as an hypocrite: infinuating that he ferved God for felf-ends, and made a profession of religion, only to promote his temporal interest; which, if he was crossed in, he would foon cast off, and curse this God VOL. I.

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to his face, if brought into affliction, though

in prosperity, he adored him.

Now to filence so heinous a charge, Job is brought to the trial; and first his substance, and next his person is exposed to the fury of his cruel enemy, to treat him in both how he would, only sparing his life. The holy man stands the shock; perhaps the greatest that ever any mere man did, and he comes off in triumph, accepted of God, and doubly bleffed by him. With reference to whom, the apostle James saith, Behold we count them happy which endure, (chap. v. 11.) Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have feen the end of the Lord, &c. i. e. and are thereby taught, that, whatever his fervants undergo, the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. The trial of their graces tend to brighten them, and make them more apparent, and to their own eye, as well as that of others; which may serve to support them against the desponding doubts, wherewith Satan may afterwards attempt to fill their fouls.

And thus, though no chastening, of any kind, for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby; Heb. xii. 11. and doeth this, as it worketh patience; and as patience, when it is tried and holdeth out, worketh experience; experience of what? Of our own fincerity, and the divine goodness; and experience begetteth hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And as God will have his people tried to shew the truth of grace in some; so by the same way, will he discover the weakness of that very grace

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grace to others, to let all see, how little reason

they have trust in themselves.

When God shall leave any, to try him, as he did Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. that he might know all that was in his heart, how soon will he that thought himself something, as to the resisting the temptations wherewith others are overcome, find himself to be nothing, if left to grapple with that great tempter and enemy Satan, alone; and that he deceiveth himself, who thinks himself a match for him, by and in his

own strength? Gal. vi. 3.

Whatever resolutions we may take up, as going into the field, how foon may we be taught by some dreadful foil or other, that without Christ we can do nothing? This is evident in the apostle Peter's case. Christ tells his Difciples, when he was about to be betrayed, Matt. xxvi. 31. All ye shall be offended because of me: Peter answers, ver. 33. Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. And when Jesus tells him particularly, ver. 34. Verily, I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice, i.e. I know what thou wilt do: Peter goes on, and faith, ver. 35. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. And doubtless his purpose was fincere and undiffembled, though too inconfiderate; for when he was most confident, he was most insensible of his own weakness; which therefore to convince him of, Satan by his instruments, was permitted to fet upon him. And then, O how foully, how often, and with what dreadful aggravations did he fall! And where had C c 2.

recover him to repentance?

Whatever conceit we may have of our furniture of armour and strength before the conslict, how soon may our apprehensions be altered, when we come actually to be engaged? 'Tis not without reason that Christ bids his Disciples watch and pray, Matt. xxvi. 41. that they enter not into temptation; that they may not be encompassed and tryed beyond their strength, and so, easily overcome; for though the spirit is willing, the sless is weak.

There is corruption as well as grace in every faint; upon which account their purposes to oppose temptations, are not so easily maintained, as they are taken up. And because nothing but experience will convince them of this, God sees fit sometimes to hold them under such long and

fore trials as they meet with.

4. This way God chuseth, that he may the more magnify his power. The greater our pressures are, and the longer continued, the more conspicuous the divine affistance is in holding us up. That the dragon and his angels should fight against a feeble woman, by which the church is represented, and not prevail, is, and yet, will be, an instance of his almighty power, to whom all things are possible. Christ proclaims from heaven, for the support of his servants, that his grace is sufficient for them; and that there may be no room for the most feeble to faint, he adds, for my strength is made persect

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in weakness. He giveth power to the faint, and to those that have no might, he increaseth strength; and will exert the perfection of it, that the preservation even of such, may be sure, Isa. xl. 29.

So now I come to the third thing.

III. And lastly, Though a believer in Christ may not have his prayer answered, in being presently freed from the bussetting of Satan, from whence he may conclude that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for him, and how far it shall be so: yet what of this grace is revealed,

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1. Is sufficient to restrain the tempter's rage, as to both the degree, and the continuance of it. He has all the infernal spirits in a chain, and hath a check upon their motions, saying to the most surious of them, Thus far shall ye go, and no farther. When God suffers Satan to go the greatest length, this is still with a limitation, as in the case of Job, Chap. i. 12. Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Chap. ii. 6. Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life.

2. It is sufficient to assure them, their trials shall be proportioned to their strength, I Cor. x. 13. There bath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; no, nor shall: for God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

3. It is fufficient to keep their faith from failing under the forest trials: for, as long as a believer holds the head, he shall be held by him, and not suffered to fink.

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4. It is sufficient to deliver them from the evil that Satan intends, and which christians may sometimes fear, namely, that they shall be finally overcome, or that they may one day perish by the hand of their spiritual enemy. They shall not, they shall never be worsted and undone, and fail of conquest.

5. It is sufficient to put an end to the conflict in the fittest season; which unerring wisdom will not fail to chuse. The God of peace shall

bruise Satan under your feet, shortly.

6. It is sufficient to bring every believer safe to heaven, through his longest and forest trials, where Satan and his messengers shall have no place. And that they may rest upon grace from heaven, sufficient for all this, may be inferred from these strong foundations.

(1.) From the relation in which they stand to God: he is their Father, who will always pity and be mindful of them, as becometh such a

relation.

(2.) From their interest in Christ, their allsufficient Saviour, who as a merciful and saithsul High Priest, is passed into the heavens; and
as there so highly exalted, wears the names on
his breast of all belonging to him; is acquainted with all their sufferings, and has the ordering
of them; and having been in all points tempted
even as they are (sin only excepted) is qualified
and disposed to employ his power for them
(which is all in heaven and earth) to promote
their safety in this world, and bring them to
eternal blessedness in the suture one with himself.

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What remains, is a brief Application, with reference to those who may feel something of the case we have now considered.

Conclude 1. That it is no unusual thing for fuch as belong to the houshold of faith, to be buffeted by Satan: and take heed you do not conclude, that you are none of that number. merely upon this account. As I would not encourage a false hope, so neither an unreasonable fear: for it is to other matters you are to look, for forming a judgment of your own case. If your union to Christ is evidenced in your being made new creatures, quickened by him, and walking after him; by your love and resolved adherence to him, and dependance upon him; come of it what will, you have no reason to fay, your relation is broken off, or that it was never begun, because of the hard things you at present suffer.

How many glorified fouls are now in heaven, who were tempted and tried as much as you, but yet overcame in the blood of the lamb, and are

now crowned?

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2. Beware of entertaining hard thoughts of God and Christ, if you are not presently freed from the like trials that others have gone through: God delays only to wait for the fittest season; which he has wisdom enough to know, and faithfulness enough to remember you in, when it comes.

5. Get and keep faith in exercise, which is the shield, by which all the siery darts of the Devil are to be quenched; and in that faith go on with a holy boldness to the throne of grace, and

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wait there in hope of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help you in time of need.

Believe you can never be strangers to heaven, but to your cost; for who can help you, if God do not? And whither can you go, if you leave him? However he may deal with you, resolve to call upon him as long as you live: cease not to pray to him, if you are not delivered, no, not till you die. God doth not tell you when he will come to your help, and you are not to prescribe to him. But conclude,

First, That to continue waiting is your plain duty, and what God hath commanded: you may hence conclude it shall not be in vain.

Secondly, That where God gives grace to hold feeking him, 'tis a comfortable ground of hope, that he will also fend grace to help in time of need.

Wherefore, the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that he hath suffered ye a while to wait, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you. And, to him be glory and dominion for ever, and ever. Amen. I Pet. v. 10, 11.

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SERMON XXII.

JOHN XVII. 15.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

In this chapter, we have the heavenly prayer of our bleffed Lord, put up a little before his ascension to heaven. The design of it is to support and comfort his disciples whom he should leave behind, ver. 13. These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. Though he was going to enter upon his last and greatest sufferings, those of a most violent and shameful death, he graciously provides for their peace and joy: having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

He knew they valued nothing more than his presence with them; he perceived their rising grief, and saw their eyes standing in tears, at the heavy news of his speedy departure from them; and he knew that he, their dearest Lord, was going whither they could not presently follow him, but must stay a considerable time behind

in an angry world: wherefore, to calm and allay their forrows, he leaves them many reviving cordials; amongst which, this in the text is a very suitable and comprehensive one, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. This request is extensive, and takes in not only Christ's present disciples, but all that should afterwards believe in him through their word, ver. 20.

I shall lay down this very plain Observation

from the words.

That though believers are not presently taken out of this world, Christ's prayer shall assuredly be

heard for their being kept from the evil.

And what more reviving news can be heard now, when groans are so loud on every side? When our personal sufferings are so many, and what we know or hear of others sufferings, adds to our affliction? Certainly, next to the actual reception of believers into heaven presently, nothing can be more sweet and desireable to them on earth, than what our blessed Lord here requests on their behalf, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

What we have here to do, will be to shew,

I. From what evil believers shall be kept.

II. What affurances they have, that they shall be kept from it, from this prayer of our Lord. And then,

III. To apply this.

I. To shew from what evil believers shall be kept.

First, 'Tis not to be extended to an absolute freedom or exemption from all pains and afflictions, which are either the common and natural consequences of their sins, or are corrections of God for their committing them. These are well enough consistent with the satisfaction of Christ, and this prayer of his, and also with the love of our heavenly father towards his children.

Sin, the moral evil, let in a deluge of natural evil upon the world, under which the whole creation groaneth, and travelleth in pain together; and faints, as men, are to have their common share. They are born with tears in their eyes as well as others, brought forth to forrow, as the sparks fly upward: and after they are new born, being to remain in a world lying in wickedness, they are liable to the common calamities of the human nature, as the bitter fruits of the primitive apostacy and revolt from God. Our first parents eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, all their descendants are experimentally to know what it means, till they are restored to the celestial paradise, there to eat of the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The satisfaction Christ hath made to the Father for his children and chosen, to open a passage for them into the everlasting kingdom, leaves it still in his power to lay upon them so much of temporal affliction, as may most subserve his glory, and their eternal blessedness. Accordingly, 'tis an express clause in the agreement he made with Christ, typised by David,

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Pfal. lxxxix. 28, &c. My covenant shall stand fast with bim. But, if his children for sake my law, and keep not my commandments, then will I vifit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will Inot utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. To this he has been always true: and as it has been always his conftant discipline with respect to the houshold of faith; so 'tis a good evidence of our belonging to it: For whom the Lord loveth be chasteneth, and scourgeth every fon whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you but as with fons. And though his rod is sometimes sharp, 'tis always necessary for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, Heb xii. 6, 7-10.

We are in heaviness no oftner, nor any longer than need be: and though no affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, this is not the evil we are to be kept from, nor can desire to be, considering the design and blessed issue; this being all the fruit, to take away sin, and that when we are chastened of the Lord, we may not be condemned with the world, I Cor. xi. 32.

Secondly, Nor does it exclude all suffering for righteousness sake. Holy mens liableness to this is verified in the experience of such in every age, and is agreeable to the prediction of Christ, John xvi. 33. In the world ye shall have tribulation. And the reason is given, Chap. xv. ver. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. And hereat they are not

to wonder; for so it hated their Lord before them. They are not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as if some strange thing happeneth unto them; this being what all true christians are to expect and prepare for, as the terms on which they consent to follow their

crucified Lord.

Thirdly, 'Tis not to be understood as a full discharge from Satan's temptation; the molesting temptations of Satan, are what holy men may here be left to conflict with. They are, above all others, the objects of his malice and rage, having escaped his dominion, and belonging to another head: and though he can't keep them out of heaven, nor follow them thither, he will do what he can to disturb them by the

way.

They may be try'd by his wiles, and his fiery darts; and therefore are called upon to take to them the whole armour of God, as being to wrestle not only with sless and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph.vi. 12. Such as have been dear to God, and eminently favoured by him, have some of them, for wise ends, had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet them, 2 Cor. xii. 7. And though the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet shortly, this shews, that in the mean time they are liable to his affaults, and are to look and hope for fecurity by fighting; they having this encouraging promise given them from heaven, My grace is sufficient for thee.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, An entire freedom from all fin, as to its being and motions, and our trouble upon that account, is not here meant. To have no more doubts and fears, no more reason to be sad or forrowful, to enjoy an uninterrupted peace within under the constant exercise of grace, to be undifturbed by the working of indwelling corruption, is above the felicity of our earthly state. This is the complaint to be heard among the most holy on this side heaven, arising from the conflict between the flesh and spirit; O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom.vii. 24. From the description of heaven, Rev. xxi. 4. that there God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away, we may infer what is our state and work before we come there. Here is not our rest, because this place is polluted, and ourselves too.

Fifthly, Nor is it to be understood of being kept from death. Believers are under the same law of mortality with other men, Gen. iii. 19. Which law is ratified, Heb. ix. 27. after the promise of the Messiah given, Gen. iii. 15. Therefore, 'twas not the design of Christ's death, nor of his prayer here in the text, to procure a deliverance from it. He went down to the grave himself, to sweeten it for his people, and shew them the way thorough it to the mansions of

glora, not to exempt them from it.

Except in the cases of two men, for special reasons, it has been made good on all that have

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gone before us, Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return: and it is to take place on all that follow us, 'till the second coming of the son of man, when in the swift winding up of time, such as shall be found alive, shall undergo a

change equivalent to a diffolution.

By dying, believers are to be freed from fin; which, as it brought in death, so, by the appointment of the divine wisdom, is by death to be abolished. The loathsom leprosy adheres so closely even to such as are habitually renewed, as that 'twas thought sit that the whole earthly tabernacle should be taken down, in order to be rebuilt at last with greater glory. 'Tis the spirits of just men that are made perfect above, whilst their bodies rest in hope below. With respect to our passage into the upper world, our souls are the first born.

Now death being what faints are not to be exempted from, you may be ready to ask, why then are they not presently taken up to heaven? At least, why are some of them kept so very long in this vale of tears? And why at last must they go hence, by dying?

For the present, let me only suggest a few

thoughts about this.

(1.) God orders it thus for his own glory, both here and hereafter. His dominion over us, and propriety in us, and right to rule us, is thus made known. He will have a people to bear his name in the world, keep up his worship, adore and praise him, honour and adhere to him; and thereby witness to his being and perfections, and declare that he is, and that he is the best master; that

that they have none in heaven but him, and that there is none on earth to be defired in comparison of him. And with respect to such, he will magnify his wisdom, power, faithfulness and love, in preserving them through sea and wilderness, thro darkness and death itself, and bring them at last safe to the promised land.

(2.) By ordering it thus, he endears unto his faints the love and grace of their Lord Jesus Christ, teaches them, from the sins and wants they here groan under, to value and esteem his merits and intercession, shews them the necessity of it, that the life they live in the slesh should be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them, and who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him: and thus he brings all his recovered ones to honour the son, even as they honour the father.

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(3.) God is pleased with this way of continuing and employing his people in this world for some time, that they may be instruments to serve the purposes of his grace in saving of souls, by bringing in others unto him. And how content should they be to make a longer stay on earth for such work as this, viz. to help to fill heaven with inhabitants? Again, we must consider,

(4.) His people are to have a time in which to run the race that is fet before them, that they may be conformed to the example of Christ, and follow him in the same way he went to glory. Thus runs the promise, Rev. iii. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.

throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down

with my Father in his throne.

(5.) Hereby God will try the fincerity and strength of their graces; of their faith and trust in him, and of their devotedness and love to him, whether they can obey and die in hope of

the blissful enjoyment of him, or not.

(6.) In this way God excites their desires after heaven; and this will abundantly sweeten it to them, that after a sorrowful life, and painful death, they enter into the possession of it. How reviving will be the voice of their heavenly Father, saying, Come up bither to your home and rest, after they are almost spent by their long

journey through this troublesome world.

(7.) The faints rest is sure, though for a time deferred: their warfare shall at length be accomplished, and course finished. They are set to work in the vineyard, but till the evening. He that has said, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, or 'till their work be done, and they are ready, has positively added as to the same persons, ver. 24, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory: so that though they cannot follow him now, they shall follow him afterwards; and they know not how soon this may be. But,

Lastly, Should the time of their stay on earth be longer, if they continue faithful and diligent, their glory will be the greater. Nothing they endure by the way, is worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed at its end. The everlasting rest will more than recompence all

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going labour, and eternity will be a duration long enough, in which to enjoy the promised land; though they move towards it but by slow paces, and though it be late e'er they arrive at it.

Having thus shewn what evil believers are not to be kept from, and pointed at some of the reasons of it, I proceed to shew from what evil

their prefervation is fure.

First, They shall be kept from all damning error and delusion. David's conclusion holds good as to every saint, Psal. xvi. 11. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. By the word of his lips they are enabled to keep themselves from the paths of the destroyer, Psal. xvii. 4. The Apostle speaks of it as the privilege of all Christ's living members, that they have an unction from the Holy One, whereby they know all things necessary to their abiding in him; and they shall do so, 1 John ii. 20. this being the end for which the Spirit is promised, John xvi. 13. even to lead them into all truth.

Secondly, They shall be kept from the tyranny of Satan. Those whom God has deliver'd from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear son, he will no more suffer to fall back or be taken captive by the Prince of darkness at his will. The strong man arm'd being once cast out by the stronger than he, shall no more regain his dominion: for whom the son fesus Christ makes free, are free indeed, John viii. 36.

Thirdly, In order to their preservation from destruction, believers shall either be kept from all temptations superior to their strength, or have

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more strength given them, answerable to their trials. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye

may be able to bear it, I Cor. x. 13.

Fourthly, As the consequent of this, they shall be kept from total and final apostasy. Being implanted into Christ as living branches in the vine, they shall never be broken off. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: which is enough for their security, that they shall be always so; they being for this end committed to him by our departing Lord, ver. 11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own Name those whom thou hast given me.

Fifthly, They shall be kept from finking under the burden of affliction. God stayeth the rough wind in the day of the east wind. Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, thou art mine. When thou passest thro' the waters, I will be with thee; and thro' the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest thro' the fire, thou shalt not be burnt. Isa. xliii. 1, 2. Thou shalt never perish; for I

will never leave thee, nor forfake thee.

Sixthly, They shall be kept from the power and reign of fin. They are planted together into the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection; and by the spirit of life, uniting them to him, they are made free from the law of fin and death.

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Sin shall not have dominion over them, nor they be any more the servants of it, as formerly. Tho' its life in believers remains for a season, as it is said of those beasts, Dan. vii. 12. Yet its dominion is taken away: and as it has lost its power, grace shall at last prevail to its utter extirpation.

Seventhly, They shall be delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law: being in Christ Jesus, there is to them no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. but they are passed from death to life. Whatever effects they may seel of their Father's displeasure when they offend, for their correction and reformation, there lies no sentence against them to suffer under his vindictive wrath.

Eighthly, They shall be kept from the slavish fear of death. To this end our Redeemer affumed flesh, and died in our stead, that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and remove the ground of his triumphing over loft finners, as having deferved wrath, which death was to be the passage to. Christ has expiated sin by the facrifice of himfelf; and being rifen and afcended, hath affured us, that he hath obtained eternal redemption for us, and that there is a way open to escape the wrath to come, and obtain everlafting life. And thus he delivers them, who thro' fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage: for, by believing in him, they have liberty to fing, Bleffed be God who has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is fin; but that to believers is forgiven: the strength of fin ten who fus

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fin is the law; but they are freed from its sentence by being under grace. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. xv. 55, &c.

By whatever pangs faints are brought down to the grave, they shall be kept from eternal torment. Blessed and boly is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death

bath no power, Rev. xx. 6.

This is the merciful Order proclaimed by the God of peace, extending to every faint, Deliver bim from going down to the pit, I have found a ransome, Job xxxiii. 24. He that was dead, viz. Jesus Christ, is alive for evermore, and he hath the keys of hell, and of death: so that they that are his shall pass safely thorough the world, and shall at last obtain salvation with eternal glory.

And now I come to the

II. General. To shew what assurance there is from the prayer of our blessed Lord, that believers shall thus be kept from the evil, though they may not presently be taken out of the world.

Several confiderations may confirm our faith

herein, which I'll only mention:

1. That of the person praying. He is our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, and saviour of men; one persectly holy, and free from sin, and in whom, as to grace, all fullness dwells; the beloved, in whom the Father is always well pleased, and who he always hears.

2. The confideration of what he asks for, and on what ground. His request is for the

preservation of his people, in order to their eternal happiness, which is most agreeable to the will of God, and the end for which he was sent by him into the world. John vi. 39. This is the Father's will which bath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. Besides, he asks for no more than by his meritorious obedience and sufferings he hath the sullest right to, which shall never be denied him.

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3. The confideration of him to whom his request is directed, viz. the God of all Grace, one full of compassion, and who, as an instance of it, spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all: and how shall he not with him also, for his sake, and at his desire, freely give

us all things?

4. The confideration of the persons for whom he intercedes, his children and chosen, such as he has a special interest in, and bears a peculiar love unto. I bear those on my heart, that are fo near to thine; I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine, i. e. I do not infift, that they should immediately follow me to glory, knowing what they are first called to; but I know with what evils they are encompassed, and will be, during their stay, behind me: wherefore, in the tenderest compassion, I pray that their preservation may be sure. Holy Father, for the fake of thy dying Son, let those that are so dear to thee, whilst they are in the world, be kept from the evil. And how fure is fuch a request to be heard? What

What remains, is a brief Application.

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First, Hence learn the greatness and constancy of Christ's love to his people, and of his defire of their eternal bleffedness with him. was love that brought him down from heaven, to feek and to fave that which was loft, that carried him to chearfully through his obedience and fufferings to that end; and which when he was about to leave the world, and them in it, made him fo careful to lodge them in fafe hands, that they might not finally miscarry. This made him breathe forth fo ardent a request in his valedictory prayer, Father, keep them from the evil: This was the affection with which he lived and died, and which he hath carried with him to heaven, that he might continually appear in the presence of God for them.

Secondly, What a powerful argument should it be with all to come to him unfeignedly, and without delay to close with him? Who would live a day in the world without an interest in this prayer of his, of being kept from the evil?

Thirdly. It may greatly strengthen the faith of true christians in their daily prayers for deliverance from evil, that it is the same request their Lord has put up for them, as well as taught them themselves to put up; and they are assured that he their head, is always heard. Now what love and thankfulness do they owe to him, for such a privilege as this?

Fourthly, How much is the world mistaken as to Christ's servants, as if they were the most miserable persons in it; when their Lord hath provided so fully for their safety and happiness,

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both here, and for ever? Whilst in this world, this is his prayer, that they may be kept from the evil of it; and when taken out of it, this is his will, that they may be with him, to behold his glory: whilst in the body, and so far absent from him, they shall be safe; when absent from the body, they shall be present with him, and thereby compleatly blessed.

How abfurd is Balaam's wish, only to die the death of the righteous, when it is their life to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty; and when this their life, under the conduct of his love, only leads to their hopeful death, and both

to a glorious eternity.

Fifthly, How inexcusable must it be to forsake Christ and his service, for fear of suffering? He that would save his life by running from the Lord of life, takes the direct way to lose it. Well may the fearful and unbelieving be the foremost of those that shall have their part in the burning lake, who would not trust the prayer of Christ, and the power of God for their preservation.

Lastly, Let this encourage us chearfully to follow the captain of our falvation, whilst we live, and to commit our fouls unto him, when we die.

Having God on our fide, to keep us from evil, if we belong to Christ, what need we fear what man can do unto us? He that cannot trust God, cannot trust any thing: And to pretend to trust him, and not chearfully serve him, is to contradict and shame our trust. 'Tis for this end

The twenty second Sermon. 409 end that we are delivered from the hands of our enemies, as to any evil they can do us, that we might serve our preserver without fear, in boliness and righteousness before him, all the days of

our lives.

Whatever discouragements you meet with, hold on your way, and, in well doing, commit the keeping of your souls to to God, as unto a faithful Creator. In his hand you are safe, whilst you live, and you may depend upon his love in Christ, when you come to die. This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide, even unto death: and whom he brings so far, he afterwards receives unto glory. They that are kept by him from the evil whilst in the world, shall, when taken out of it, enter into his joy.

Whenever you are inclined to faint, remember, greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. Your keeper is of almighty power, unerring wisdom, unquestionable faithfulness, and everlasting love: and as relying on him, every believer hath good reason to make the same conclusion with the Apostle, 2 Tim. iv. 18. The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

I JOHN III. I.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

THE Apostle John, the sacred penman of this epistle, may well be stiled the divine, from the divine and heavenly subjects of which he treats.

He was the beloved disciple: and divine love, and the wonderful effects of it, were what he

delighted to dwell upon.

In the close of the foregoing Chapter, having mentioned that great matter of being born of God, he is in this in an holy transport, from the contemplation of the high relation and the blessed change it speaks, the glorious privileges it imports, the honour and happiness comprehended in it; and above all, from the adorable love from whence the whole proceeds, and to which all must be ascribed. By the beams, he is led up to the sun, and traces the streams to the source and fountain; where he stands admiring the

the grace which he could not comprehend, and inviting others to do it with him. Behold, what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: i.e. that we should be made so by regeneration and adoption, and acknowledged and dealt withal, as the children of the Most High: that we should have the new name, and the divine nature; the present privileges, and the hopes too of the glorious inheritance of sons to be enjoyed hereafter. What kindness, what grace is this! how rich! how great! how free! behold, what manner of love is this! fee its vast and wonderful dimenfions, its breadth and length, its depth and height, and how far it passes and exceeds our knowledge.

View it in its rise, and progress; in its author, and manner of discovery; from whom it proceeds, and on whom it is bestowed: what dissipation distinctions it overcomes, what difference it makes, what dignity it confers, what happiness it disposes for, entitles to, and is the earnest, pledge, and very beginning of, &c. And see, if it be not all ravishing, glorious, and divine. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

No farther explication of the words is necessary. The Doctrine they contain is evident, viz.

That the love of God in advancing lost sinners to the dignity and relation of being children, is matter of their just wonder, thanksgiving, and joy.

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The Apostle wanted words to set this forth: his expressions failed, and were too narrow to do it. His conceptions were swallowed up, and he being loft in the pleafing ocean, cried out in a rapture, Behold what manner of love! O aftonishing grace, that creatures, that men, that finners should be thus honoured! that we should be brought into fo near an alliance to God, after a finful and shameful revolt from him! mere good will is the fpring of this, fuch as angels are employed to fing the praises of; and we may well join with them, confidering all things that concur to form the relation, and what privileges are confequent upon it.

God is love; and will be known to be fo, whatever hard thoughts his enemies have of him. He began in love to his people, when he he laid the foundation of their happiness from everlasting; he pursues it the same way, thro' all the revolutions of time, and in the same way will make it compleat in the enjoyment of his presence in heaven eternally. I admire and adore this love of God, this will be the delightful employment of heaven; and what better becomes the heirs of heaven in their passage to it than this, especially when they are at the feast of

love, the Lord's supper?

To affift you herein, I shall shew,

I. In what respects real christians are to be understood to be the children of God; which relation is the refult and evidence of fuch inexpressile love.

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II. What confiderations may ferve to fet off and magnify the love of God in taking them into this near relation to him.

I. How real christians are to be understood to be the children of God; which relation carries in

it so much love.

We may be faid to be related to God as chil-

dren, upon several accounts.

1. By creation. As we received our beings from him, we, and fo all mankind, are his children, and the whole world is his family. In this respect, one is as nearly related to God as another: for we are all his offspring, Acts xvii. 28. And it must be acknowledged great goodness to be made creatures of a rational nature, and of the chiefest order in this lower world: but, as we may be thus far the children of God, and yet never enjoy him, the relation of which the Apostle speaks with so much triumph, is not founded upon our creation in common with 'Tis indeed matter of thankfulness, other men. that the divine power and goodness brought me out of nothing, and gave me my being amongst a species of creatures capable of endless glory: but notwithstanding this, I know, fince that kind of creatures have fallen and become rebellious, I may miss of it, and fink into eternal mifery: and should I do so, it were far better for me that I had never been born one of that kind.

If we cast off the love and obedience of children, 'twill be an aggravation of our fin and punishment, that we had God in this respect to be our Father; but it can yield no relief to me, if

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414 The twenty third Sermon.

I am an ignorant and incorrigible finner; feeing it is written, that he that made fuch will not

fave them, Ifa. xxvii. 11.

2. We may be faid to be the children of God by external calling and profession. Thus God stiles the whole Jewish nation, his son, Hos. xi. 1. As being instructed by himself, they externally owned and worshipped him the living and true God, and were in covenant with him; and fo were distinguished from the rest of the world, who were drowned in idolatry. This is pleaded by them, Isa. lxiii. 16, 19. Doubtless thou art our Father, i. e. in a nearer manner than to the infidel world: We are thine, thou never barest rule over them, they are not called by thy Name.

The church is God's family: and as many as are by baptism, the seal of the covenant, entered into the number of his people (and join with fuch in his worship and service, professedly and visibly practifing as they do) may be faid to be the fons of God. And thus to be related to God, is a very valuable privilege; but yet, no Whilst in the church on earth, I faving one. may be numbered among the fons of God, and pass for such: but, O my soul, how many, every day, fink as low as hell, who stood in the fame relation, and made the fame claim to a

Father in heaven, that I now do?

Wherefore,

3. There is a higher respect in which we are to be fons of God, viz. by regeneration, and adoption; by a real, and a relative change, which all the heirs of beaven pass under, and none

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none else. By these they are allied to God, so as none are besides them; and he is their Father, so as he is a Father to none else. The relation is peculiar; and so is the love bestowed in it.

We are the sons of God by regeneration. By this we are raised to the life and likeness of God, in that fense in which it was lost by our revolt from him; and so made the objects of that love which he bears unto his own, in whom he takes complacency and delight. He is not now ashamed to be called the Father of such; having, by his grace, renewed them in the spirit of their minds, to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which after God is created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Their mind is savingly enlightened, their heart changed, corruption is mortified, a divine nature is introduced: in a word, all old things are done away, and all things made new; and thus through the powerful influence of the spirit of holiness, they become the fons of God indeed.

And where God raises any to the temper of children, he by adoption graciously receives them into the number, and deals with them as sons. None of their past rebellions shall be objected against them, nor bar their way to the promised kingdom. Their heavenly Father embraces them with an everlasting love, and will bestow

upon them a never-fading inheritance.

The ground of this is the sufferings and death of Christ, making satisfaction to justice, and our closing with him, as the beloved in whom the Father

Father hath declared himself well pleased. Being by the Spirit of Grace persuaded and enabled to accept of Christ, as offered in the Gospel, we are, by a vital union, made his members: upon which, according to the tenor of the new covenant, his Father becomes ours, and we for his sake, and upon his account, become co-heirs

with him of the fame glory.

O the condescending grace of God! when we were for ever unworthy to be made his fervants, having fo heinously finned against him, that it was, though he foreknew this, the good pleafure of his will to predestinate us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, Eph. i. 5. When for fin, we were by the law condemned and fentenced to wrath; notwithstanding God sent forth his Son to redeem us from that state of bondage, that we might receive the adoption of fons, Gal. iv. 4, 5. And to carry on the defign, he fends forth the Spirit of his Son, to beget in his chosen a child-like nature, and draw them to Christ, as their Lord and Saviour: by their interest in whom, the relation is founded, and as many as receive him, have the power and privilege given them to become the fons of God, even to all them that believe in his name, John i. 12.

From this time forward, they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the houshold of God, Eph. ii. 19. They belong to his family, as distinct from the rest of the world; they being, in obedience to his call, come out from among them, and casting off their defilements: upon which, he, ac-

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cording to his word, receives them, and becomes a Father to them, and they, in the most endeared fense, become his sons and daughters, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

Thus is peace made, the enmity slain, God and his people mutually allied to each other, as father and children, and the blissful relation settled upon the most firm and comfortable grounds: such as were resolved upon by eternal love, obtained by the blood of Jesus, and accomplished by the riches of grace, which will issue in eternal glory. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

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II General. To shew what considerations may free to heighten and endear the love of God in taking them into this relation to himself.

1. The confideration of his majesty and supreme greatness, which thus vouchsafes to make and own us for his children, notwithstanding our infinite distance from him. Behold what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us! O, how amazing is it, that the great God should thus regard and honour unworthy, wretched, finful creatures! With what concern doth David, a subject, entertain the proposal of being related to king Saul! I Sam. xvii?. 18. Who am I, and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king! but, how infinitely more aftonishing is it, that not an earthly prince, but the God of heaven, should give us a place in his family, and put us among his children! Who are we, that the VOL. I. Ee

the glorious Jehovah, the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wife God, should thus manifest his grace to us! He is perfectly happy in himself; and as having let out his perfections, he hath thousands and ten thousands of angels, beings of a higher order, that are stiled his fons, Job xxxviii. 7. being in a brighter degree such. And tho', in his first production, man was lower than they, yet as being by fin, become even fo low as to be like the beaft that perisheth, what reason have we that are of this kind, to take up the Pfalmist's words, Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be mindful of him? How is it that thou wilt draw fo near this lower world? How is it that thou wilt be a Father, not only to unbodied spirits above, but also to the spirits dwelling in flesh? That thou wilt visit us with thy grace, recover us to thy likeness, give us a place in thy family, heart, and love, who deferved for ever to be cast out? What hearts should we have should we ever make light of such favour as this?

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2. The confideration, how early the divine love laid the foundation of their fonship whom it pleased to recover from the common ruin, in which it saw them lie involved with others, heighteneth this love, and the sense of it. From eternity, God resolved to make the world, and man upon it, in a perfectly holy, but yet mutable state. In this his first estate, he was of ability sufficient to stand: yet being left in the hand of his own counsel, He, from whom nothing is hid, very well foreknew, he would quickly fall. And when the great Creator had the whole world before

before him, as it were weltring in blood and felf-destroyed, and therefore might justly have left it to perish, his divine bowels began to rowl, his eye to pity, and his mercy inclined Him to save. The time foreseen of our misery was an occasion of love. A council is called, our recovery resolved on, a select number chosen and predestinated to the adoption of sons, Eph. i. 5, 11. And the decree is past, as the result of the freest savour, it working before ever the soundation of the world was laid, Eph. i. 4, 5. and the method was fixed for the certain accomplishment in the appointed season: which leads

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3. The confideration of the means ordained to make way for their adoption, even the fufferings and death of the only begotten Son of the Father, whose love we have here at his table to view, endears the love of God to us. 'Tis by Jesus Christ that we are predestinated to the adoption of children; and only through his meritorious obedience and facrifice, could the decree for help take place. Having by wilful transgression fallen from God, his favour is forfeited as a father, and our guilt subjects us to his flaming wrath. All commerce is cut off, and no more alliance is to be fettled between heaven and earth, till fin be expiated, and justice satisfied. None could do this, but God's only fon, and he by dying; as without blood there is no remission. Thus stood the case between God and us. And, who now would not have thought, that all hope of recovery had been for ever lost and cut off, if we could no otherwise Ee 2

have been restored to the happiness of the sons of God? It might well have been thought, we must have perished in our miserable state of distance from him.

But now, fee God's compassion for his chofen, tho' thus far gone, and unable to hope for recovery; tho' they are by nature children of wrath, they shall not be thus left. The council of peace is opened, and the feed of it is early promised; and in faithfulness, in the fulness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and fent his fon to be a propitiation for our fins, I John iv. 10. Every thing here speaks the love of God to be transcendently great: considering who it is that is given, what he is given for, the persons for whom he is given, and God's readiness notwithstanding all, freely and as unmoved by us, thus to fend and part with him.

(1.) Confider the person given: he is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's eternal and only begotten fon. How aftonishingly doth it found that he should be given for us? This is the highest instance of immense goodness, and can never be exceeded. What did God fay to Abraham upon his going to offer Isaac, Gen. xxii. 12. Now I know that thou fearest God, i.e. 'tis now manifest that thou dost so. And, with what enamoured hearts may we fay to God, as having fent his fon, and given us his Christ, Now, O Lord, we know that thou lovest us men, and that thy love is above all conception DVSC

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great; feeing thou hast not withheld thy fon, thy only fon from us? There is no room to doubt or disbelieve God's love: we may stand admiring at that unspeakable gift that springs therefrom. That one so infinitely high and dear to the Father, as the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, his son, who lay in his bosom, and in whom he took infinite delight; that he should be sent from from heaven to earth, to bring us back to himfelf, and to our lost happiness, What manner of love is this?

(2.) Consider what this person is sent for, viz. to fuffer, to bleed, and die; to be crucified and put to death, even by those that he came to fave. For this end, he had a body prepared him, and tabernacled amongst men; and after a life spent in labour and travail, in hunger and thirst, poverty and want, in doing good and receiving evil, he was at last brought as a lamb to the flaughter, to shut up his forrowful life in a bitter and ignominious death. As high and glorious as he was in himfelf, as much as he was beloved in of his Father, he was given to stand in our room and stead, and to bear the wrath that we deferved, to redeem us from our fall and further threatned mifery, and to regain our lost privileges and felicities for us.

It pleased the Father to bruise him: he hath put him to grief and pain, Isa. liii. 10. What torments did he undergo in his body, and yet endured greater agonies in his foul? He was wounded and buffeted: he was accused and condemned, tho' perfectly innocent: crowned with

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thorns,

thorns, hung on a cross, and his hands and feet nailed to the curfed tree. His body was racked. his blood spilt, and his life poured forth.

How impossible is it to describe the thousandth part of the fufferings he endured in body and foul together! He fweat drops of blood in the garden, under the apprehensions of the bitter cup he was to drink; the wrath he was to bear. How earnestly did he pray, that if it was possible, this cup might pass away! but this was not to be granted; the defigns of love were, by his

drinking it, to be attained.

The purpose was fixed, the hour set in which he was to be apprehended, bound, and led to judgment, arraigned and sentenced, stript and fcourged, and at last shamefully crucified. He was made a spectacle of horror to heaven and earth. The fun, as amazed, withdrew his light: darkness covered the land: his Father hid his face, and left him to the deepest stroaks of justice, making him cry out, My God, my God, why hast thou for saken me? He groaned, and bled, and at last expired: He selt the heavy pressures of the divine wrath for fin, and had no release, 'till he could say the word, It is finished.

Thus much his Father was pleased to lay upon him; not that he hated him, but because he loved us, and by fo amazing an instance of forrow, and at so dear a rate, would make a way for his love to be bestowed on us, in bringing us into the relation of his fons and daughters.

(3.) This love will appear all miracle, if we confider the persons Christ was given for, to do and fuffer all this, even for the infinitely un-

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worthy. We neither had merited, nor could merit any fuch love; but, on the contrary, deferved his severest wrath. We were running from God, when he sent his son to call us back; were in rebellion against him, when the death of Christ was not thought too great a price to save our lives, and open a way to our happiness.

When notice was given in this lower world, that the fon of God was coming from heaven, what could have been expected, but that his business into the world would have been to have condemned the world, and haftened the execution of fuch as he found in arms against him? But who can think, and not wonder, that he should come to suffer and die for such as had thus forfeited their lives, and deserved to be flain? Herein the love of God never had a parallel among men: for scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. v. 7, 8. When we were alienated from the life of God, full of enmity against him, unworthy of an abode on earth, and prepared by fin for hell, God would in this our state send his Son to die for us, to rescue us from deserved wrath, and procure us a new title to life and glory: Behold, what manner of love!

That the just should suffer for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, and this should be done not among mere equals for one another; but that the prince should suffer for the rebels against

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him;

him; that the Lord of glory should suffer for the children of disobedience; that God should so love the world, that to spare the lives of his enemies in it, he should deliver up his son to die in their stead: this is such a manner of loving, as the highest wonder cannot reach. I'll add,

This shews the wonderfulness of the love of God, that he did this freely, and as unmoved by any thing that was or could be in us. We made no suit for any such thing; the party offended first sought for reconciliation, and that when he could easily have avenged himself upon us his adversaries, and look'd us into destruction.

It could not have entered into our minds to conceive, or our hearts to have defired such a remedy to make way for our recovery. God manifest in the sless, was too great a mystery to be found out by us; or if it could, how strange would it have been, to have turned it into a request? "O Lord, let thy eternal Son come "down from his glorious throne, to a cross of "misery and pain, that we the children of "wrath, may become the sons of thee, the giver "of pardon, peace and eternal blessedness."

But grace hath wrought for us exceeding abundantly above what we could ask or think. And whilst angels stoop down to look into this deep mystery, may such as are chiefly concern'd in it, cry out with wonder and joy, Behold what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us!

(4.) We have reason to admire the love of God in making us his sons upon this further

confideration, if we call to mind the state he finds us in, when he comes to work the blessed change, and the power and patience he exercises therein.

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Even fuch of us, as we hope are chosen to the adoption of sons, were by nature children of wrath as well as others; were under the government of Satan, and the dominion of sin, and gone off from God, and dark, and dead, and disaffected to him like them: and what work hath he had to do, before he could make us sensible of our state, and perswade us to change it? How long did he wait, and call, and strive, and knock, whilst we sinners slighted all, and put him off, resusing to hearken and yield? And yet, so great was his love, as not to take the first denial, but renew his suit; as if it were his own happiness which he endeavoured, in making us his children.

Christians, look back a little on your past conslicts, to raise your wonder, and inflame your love. How long did your stubborn hearts stand out? How many rich offers of Christ and grace were refused? How long did you prove deaf to the calls of the word, and fight against the motions of the Spirit? How often did you stifle convictions, and do all you could to pluck out the arrows of the Almighty, that from time to time were stuck in your souls, as if you were resolved to be miserable, and admit no fear of perdition, till you were past hope? And where had you now been, had you been suffered to go on? When God has offered to become your re-

conciled

conciled Father, how little have you regarded it; as if the relation was not valuable, or you were well enough where you were? And yet

for all this, you have not been given over.

This is not the manner of men: Would a prince court a perishing beggar to accept of his alliance, and a place in his family, and a title to his possessions? Would he not resent the first denial, so as to make no further motion, but leave him to the misery he would obstinately chuse? and, had God dealt thus with us, how forlorn had been our case? but he repeated his motions to us; and when his gentler means would not do, he, by his efficacious grace, subdued the obstinacy of our wills, and by a sweet violence, to use the gospel-phrase, compelled us to come in unto him.

O the patience that waited on us! O the fovereign love exercised towards us! That the light should be held so long to eyes so shut as ours, 'till we were made to see ourselves lost and miserable, and 'till we were brought to hearken to the proposals of the Gospel, and sly to Christ by faith; that the benefits of his redemption might be made ours, and we might be brought to partake of his image.

(5.) I might go on and mention the happy difference made in the relation of such as are dignified to be children of God, both from themselves, before it was made, and from others.

What greater thing can be faid of any, than that he is one of the houshold of God, in a state of sonship to the king of glory, and raised from

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the dust hereto? from a state of sin and defilement, of deformity, guilt, bondage, and mifery, hereto? What love must that be, which,

brings about this?

Laftly, I might mention the privileges of the fons of God, negative and positive, as to time and eternity, to heighten and endear the love of God to all that are called to be and really made fuch. All fuch are freed from the power of corruption, that fitted them for hell; and from the guilt of fin, that bound them over to it. Allfuch are interested in their Father's care and peculiar regard, have free access into his presence, and have the Spirit to help them to make known their requests. The promises are theirs, which they are allowed to plead, live upon, and fetch their comfort, support and encouragement from, in all the turns of life. They are the objects of God's complacency and delight, upon whom his eye is always open for good, and are fuch as he will never leave nor forfake. They shall be guided by his counsel, even unto death; and then shall have a privilege more worth than all the world, that of committing their departing fouls into the hands of their heavenly Father, by Jesus Christ their blessed Redeemer. hopes in Christ are not confined to the present life, but run beyond it to a bleffed eternity: And fo, beyond the grave, they have an inheritance referved answerable to their relation. But wherein the glory of that confifts, we must stay 'till the possession of it, to be fully informed.

Beloved, faith the Apostle, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he, i. e. Christ, shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. We then shall be for ever with the Lord, and made fit company for him, by being conformed to this our heavenly head: For as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, I Cor. xv. 49.

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SERMON XXIV.

COR. XV. 26.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.

In the foregoing verse, it is said of Christ, that he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. There assurance is given, that all his and his peoples enemies in general, shall be subdued; and here in the text, one of the most formidable of them is particularly mentioned, that shall feel his conquering power. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.

In the words we have,

1. The subject spoken of, Death.

2. The manner after which it is represented, viz. as an enemy; and as to the rank it holds with reference to other enemies, it is the last enemy.

3. What is faid of it, That it shall be de-

stroyed.

4. The order and time of its destruction, it shall be destroyed last of all: The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.

Doct.

Doct. How long soever Death may reign, and shew its enmity and power, in removing and seemingly destroying the inhabitants of this world, at the end of time it shall itself be destroyed.

Under this, our work will be to shew,

I. What death the apostle here speaks of, and

stiles an enemy.

II. What kind of *enemy* it is, and from whence it may appear, how well the title of an enemy agrees to it.

III. Its rank, it being the last enemy, and what

this implies.

IV. How it shall be destroyed, and by whom, with the assurance we have of these.

V. That this shall be the enemy last destroyed.

And then the Use we may make of the whole.

I. To shew what death the apostle here speaks

of, and stiles an enemy.

He herein refers to the diffolution of the foul and body, the two parts, of which we are made up; to the pulling down the earthly house of this tabernacle, upon which, the spirit that had its dwelling there, removes. This is the conclusion of the life and stay of a creature upon earth, that was set here to act for eternity; after which no more is to be done preparatory to it; but it is to fare forever, according to what it was, and did below.

And we may view this death, 1. With reference to the creature it divideth and separateth.

2. With reference to the state it puts an end to.

And, 3. With reference to the consequences of

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1. With reference to the creature it divideth and separateth in its constituent parts; for thus it deals with every one it seizes. To die, is to have soul and body parted asunder. We live by the conjunction of these, and the separation of them is death.

The person that dies, thereupon ceases to be what he was before. The body becomes a breathless clod; and tho' we commonly call the deceased by the same name as before, and say, we saw such a one dead; yet, when meant of the body only, how vastly different a thing is it from the same person alive? And, as to the soul, 'tis to us invisible; but tho' it be so, and little known, what it is, we may say it was but a part, tho' the chiefest part of the person, who when alive, and having soul and body united, we conversed with.

The substance of the body remains, but inanimate: the soul likewise exists, but unbodied. Thus an excellent creature is separated and divided in its constituent parts, and ceases to be what it was.

2. We may view death with respect to the state it puts an end to. We are here upon our trial for an after world, in a state of probation, wherein heaven is to be won or lost for ever. A deliverance must either now be secured from the wrath to come; or at our going hence, that wrath must be our unchangeable portion. Of such a state as this, death is the end: as soon as the breath goes out of our body, time concludes, and eternity begins with us.

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By dying, we move off from this world, as from a stage where we have acted our part, no more to re-enter, to add what was omitted, or

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We are to be no longer here as inhabitants, nor as probationers: 'tis no more to be the place of either our abode, or preparation. grace we have to get, we must get now: what work we have to do, must be done now. Looking after the pardon of our fins, peace and reconciliation with God, the mortification of our corruptions, the renovation of our natures, the improvement of our talents, &c. are all works belonging to the present state: whatever is done, as to these must be done now or never.

Here a carnal finner may become a faint; fuch as are afar off may be made nigh; the children of wrath have a way open to escape. A title to heaven may now be obtained, and a meetness for it, by such as are at present without either; but this can be faid no longer than while they are alive: at death we have done with the present world, and are to be no more sojourners, nor probationers in it. Now we are in motion, tending to happiness or misery; immediately upon our remove, we shall be fixed in the one or the other, without poffibility of change.

3. Death may be confidered as to what follows upon it. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it, Ecclef. xii. 7. The bodies, even of faints, as well as of others, are buried out of fight, and thrown into a filent grave; where they

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they lie inactive, and turn to rottenness and dust; at a long remove from the souls which they once were united to, and served: and tho' those souls themselves be said to be made perfect, as spirits, just after their separation, they are yet lest in a kind of widowed state till the resurrection, and their re-union to their bodies in a glorious estate.

This is that death that fin hath let in upon the world, and which it is faid to be the wages of. 'Tis what separates soul and body, and so divides an excellent creature in its constituent parts, and removes it from its present state of trial; and thereupon, the soul, the active ruling part, is dismissed to an unseen eternal world, and the body, breathless as a clod, is cast into the earth to corrupt.

These are the things that belong to death, which in the text is stilled an enemy. Upon which,

II. We are to confider what kind of enemy it is. And here,

1. 'Tis obvious, 'tis a common enemy; common to young and old, rich and poor, faints and finners.

(1.) 'Tis common to young and old, to such as are in the prime of their time, and to those that are in their declining years. How frequently do we see, or hear of this? Where is there any among the living, but there are many of the same age or size that are dead, and others daily adding to their number? Death cuts down one and another, as commissioned from heaven. Sometimes elder and younger together; often little children that have numbered but a few days, Vol. I. F f before

before the more advanced in years: so that they that came last into the world, are first removed. Tho' the age of man is threescore years and ten, as what sew go beyond, we have no security of being spared so long; and how many die before

they reach half way?

The day with some, is long, and they stand 'till a hoary head shews them to be ripe; and then they are cut down, and brought to the grave in a good old age, like a shock of corn in its season: with others, the sun sets even at noon, and when we expected and promised ourse' as the lives of our friends many years, by a surprizing stroke, they have been taken away. Thus death is common to young and old.

(2.) It is so to rich and poor: both these are cut down by death, and meet together in the grave. They that enjoy most of the world, can't thereby prolong their day, but are under the same necessity of dying as well as the meanest.

(3.) Death is common to faints and finners. Both these go the same way out of the world; tho' the difference between them immediately after, is unspeakable. They are neither of them always to remain upon earth; and by dying, both the one and the other are to be removed.

The like may be faid of all other diffinctions of men, and this in all ages throughout the world, in every country and place. Dying is stilled the way of all the earth, and the grave the house appointed for all living.

2. 'Tis an bidden concealed enemy. We know that there is fuch an enemy; but knownot when

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it will make its affault upon us, so as to stop our breath, and dissolve the union between soul and body. It may set upon us unawares: upon how many has it done so, who have died before they have had time, or power to give notice that they were sick? Some go away in their sleep; others walking, and in the midst of business or discourse, when, it may be, they thought of nothing less. When eagerly pursuing after this world, many are suddenly snatched into another; and, 'tis what none can promise himself an exemption from.

3. 'Tis an enemy we are always liable to, and can't fay any moment, that it will not fet upon

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In the midst of life we are in death, incompassed with it on every side: For what is our life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. We are liable to death as soon as we begin to live; and from our coming into the world, have no assurance any day or hour, that we shall not therein be dismissed out of it. Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a slower, and is cut down: be sleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And as our life goes off, death draws near, and we are always exposed to its killing blow.

4. 'Tis a most powerful and irressible enemy. There is no defence against its stroke, nor way to escape or prevent it. The strongest, on whom death lays its hand, must yield. There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit;

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neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war, Eccles.viii. 8.

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5. 'Tis an authorized enemy. It comes by commission from heaven, and acts according to his order, in whose hand all our times are. It is appointed unto men once to die; and the law will stand firm, and execution be done, 'till

Christ's second coming.

6. 'Tis an inexorable enemy. No wealth can bribe, nor eloquence perswade, nor cries or entreaties move, nor holiness awe, or otherways prevail with it to spare. Riches profit not in the day of wrath: nor will power, policy, or any other thing that can be named, be of use to avert the stroke of this enemy, Death. Castles and guards are no fecurity against its approach; nor can the strongest gates and bars prevent its entrance. Threats here are fruitless, and entreaties, in how moving a manner foever uttered, are all in vain. The mighty warrior, the eloquent orator, the skilful physician, could not hold any foul in life by all their efforts, even in conjunction, that it shall not see death. Whatever may be pleaded in the behalf of any, when death comes, there's no excuse, all must go. Even faithful Abraham, and holy David, and learned, gracious, and useful Paul, these were to die as well as others.

7. Lastly, 'Tis a formidable enemy. And it

may be faid to be fo, upon many accounts.

(1.) Often in regard of its fore-runners, the ficknesses, pains, and wearisome restless days and nights that lead it on. How much is endured by some, before soul and body can be parted?

parted? with what agony and anguish are they filled, by the taking in pieces of the earthly tabernacle? and how deep a groan is fometimes heard, when the last stroke is given, and the whole frame falls down?

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Some indeed are gently removed. The lamp of life burns weaker and weaker, and at last eafily goes out; fo that they are dead before they apprehend themselves dying: but how long are others kept upon the rack, under tortures that no words can utter? Death runs upon them as a lion, breaking their bones, from morning to night; fo that they die, as it were, many times over, before they can die once. They are in the case described, Job xxxiii. 19, &c. Chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain: So that their life abborreth bread, and their foul dainty meat. Their flesh is confumed away that it cannot be seen, and their bones that were not feen, flick out.

(2.) 'Tis formidable, in regard of what it is, and comes to do, and of what follows upon it.

(1.) The separation between soul and body, which death comes to make, is far from being eafy, even in the forethought: What must it be then, when it comes to be endured? Those two companions that have been in the nearest conjunction with each other ever fince life began, must now be divided. If it be hard for two intimate friends to be parted; how much more for the man himself to be divided? his soul from his body, neither of them knowing what it is to be alone. Nature feems to shrink from this: the foul would fain support a finking body, the body Ff 3 retain

retain the departing foul; but it cannot be. The parting of these in death, makes it formidable.

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(2.) 'Tis moreover so, as the excellent frame of nature is to be broken by it, and all bodily motions and operations made to cease. The curious fabrick, built with so much art, and nourished up with so much diligence and care, must at once be dashed in pieces; the various members rendered unsit for the parts they but just now performed, and all together become a sense less lump: The eye must be closed, the ear stopt, the tongue unable to speak, the heart to move; and thus the living active creature is changed into a dead corps.

(3.) The grave in which this corps is laid, is a dark and loathfome place, full of rottenness and putrefaction; and it is forgotten in it, and walked over by men, with as little regard as if the deceased had never been. When laid there, whatever figure we made before it, it will be left us to fay to corruption, thou art my father: to the worm, thou art my mother, and my fifter.

(4.) Death is a departure from all this world,

both as to perfons and things.

1. From persons, the inhabitants of the world; and among these, from our friends and relations, how near and dear soever. These, we are no more to receive any savour from, or do any offices of kindness to, but a final sarewel is to be taken. This, how difficult soever, must be done. Parents, at death, must be separated from their children, and children from their parents: from holy sathers, or tender mothers, to whom they might

The twenty fourth Sermon. 439 might have faid while living as Ruth did to Naomi, whither thou goeft, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: nothing but death shall part thee and me; and it will truly do it. Hufband and wives, that are as one flesh, must thus be put afunder; ministers and people must, and all other friends leave one another. Those whom we love best, and value most, and have the greatest reason to do so, upon our remove at death, we are to leave.

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2. And as we are to depart from our acquaintance and friends in the world; fo also from the things of it, whatever of them we possess or enjoy in it. We must bid farewel to houses and lands, wealth and estate, and all the accomdations of the outward man. None of these things are to descend after us, nor we to return to them: the places that have known us, are to know us no more.

And hereupon, we are to have done with all the employments of the present state, civil and religious. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goeft, Eccles. ix. 10. Even as christians, we shall have done with all duties suited to a preparatory state. We are to pray no more, hear no more, have no more fermons, facraments, ordinances and means of grace: death is the night in which no man can work as before, in God's house, or in his own.

(5.) What makes death yet more formidable, is its being a passage into an endless state. As it lets us out of one world, so it transmits us into another, a world unfeen, and which we have little

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little acquaintance with; and yet where we are to abide for ever.

And under this view,

There may be feveral concomitants and circumstances to add to the terror of death: as,

of our state of trial before our work is done; that is, before our peace with God is made, an interest in Christ secured, the pardon of sin obtained, a title to heaven cleared up, and confirmed by a meetness for it. How affecting will be the case, should I be constrained to say in my last moments, and with my last breath, I am to have no more time for such a work as this? and yet, O my soul, in how great a degree have I mispent that which is past?

2. The ferious believing thoughts of that judgment which is to follow death, render it formidable, confidering who is to be judge: one that fearcheth the heart, and hath observed all our sins of nature and life, of our actions, words and thoughts; one who hath taken notice of all that we have done and omitted, we are accountable to for all, and must be determined by him to a state of happiness, or misery that will never

end.

3. The doubts the departing foul may be under concerning its after state, whether it shall be received to heaven; nay, the sears wherewith it may be filled of being condemned to wrath, make death appear an enemy, and a very formidable one to the man that it allows no longer to stay in this world.

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Besides all this, how much have we to prove death an enemy, from its fad effects and influences upon us in the present world! 'Tis this that damps our defires after heaven, there being no way of coming to it, but by dying; and makes us cleave fo close to the present state, and unwilling to leave it: the passage being frightful whenever we remove from this earth, and change it for what is better, the glory of the upper world. While the heavenly glory opened to faith, should call our hearts to heaven, the grim porter that keeps the entrance, too much discourages us from looking that way, and hold down our thoughts to the things of this earth. 'Tis from hence, that christians are kept from passing so comfortably as they have reason for, thro' the present world, and that at their going off from it, fo few finish their course with joy.

The valley of the shadow of death is so dreadful, that it greatly hinders the reviving influence of the unconceivable blessedness that lies beyond it: and hereupon, when God should be honoured by the joyful praises of his people, under the sense of his love, and when they are just upon entring into his kingdom, his ways are reproached, and others are discouraged from walking in them, by their doubts and dejections, which the ap-

pearance and approach of death occasion.

In this and many other instances, death appeareth to be an enemy indeed.

But 'tis time to hasten to the

III^d. Thing to be confidered, the rank death holds among our enemies: 'Tis the last.

This intimates,

overlook, and be unconcerned about. The devil, the world, and the flesh are combined against us, to hinder our salvation and work our ruin. A christian's life is a continual warfare. Many assaults he is liable to while he lives; and then is to encounter with the king of terrors,

and finish the conflict by dying.

2. Whatever enemies go before it, death, to a believer, will be the last. After this, the warfare will be over, and there will be no more fighting, nor fear, nor occasion for either. This can be said only of those that have a part in the first resurrection; the unrenewed sinner hath enemies to fear beyond death, even an offended God, and an everlasting hell, into which soul and body are to be cast, to suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire.

As death then is the last enemy, it is strong consolation which the text delivers, when it as-

fureth us,

IV. That it is to be destroyed. And we are moreover told by revelation from heaven, both

how, and by whom.

The way of its destruction is to be by the refurrection, when believers shall be freed from all the evils death held them under, as to any part of them, and raised to all the blessedness of heaven, and in both soul and body enter into the joy of their Lord there: after which there shall be no more death, but mortality shall be swallowed up of life. 'Tis by Christ, the captain of our salvation, that death is to be destroy'd. For the doing of this, he has his kingdom and rule, which must must be continued, till all hindrances in the way of his people's salvation are removed. For he must reign, till all enemies are put under his feet; and death shall be destroyed among the rest.

Of this we are secured by his own death and resurrection, whereby he hath laid the soundation of his people's happiness, and hath obtained all power in heaven and earth to complete it. He is the resurrection and the life; and because he liveth, all his members shall live also. Tho' he was once dead, he is alive again, and will live on for ever, and hath the keys of hell and of death: so that be this enemy as formidable as it will, it shall detain no part of his purchase from him. As surely as Christ died and rose again, so surely they that now sleep in him shall rise after him, and be for ever with him in the same glory.

V. Death, as it is to be destroyed, is to be

destroyed last.

The spirits of just men are already made perfect; but their bodies are referved in the grave till the refurrection: and then, they that fleep in the dust shall awake and fing, as rising to everlasting life. Christ will come to be glorified in bis faints, and to be admired in all them that believe, 2 Theff. i. 10. To be admired in his faithfulness to his trust committed to him by his Father, when it shall appear, that of all which he hath given bim, he hath lost nothing, but according to his engagement, hath raised it up again at the last day: and to be admired in his faithfulness to his promife to his members, by which he declared, that the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth,

forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, John v. 28, 29. And at the same time he will be admired in his power, whereby the body sown in corruption, shall be raised in glory, in a likeness to his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Phil. iii. 21.

And how agreeable will it be to all his members, to find themselves intire, and collected into one body, to follow their gloristed Lord and head to the mansions he told them of, and bid them expect; and there presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory with exceeding

joy?

A few words by way of Use shall close all. The APPLICATION.

1. Is death fuch an enemy, so formidable an one? How supporting is it, that at the same time we hear of its power and terror, we are also told it shall be destroyed? In a world where death reigns, what life may be setched from that promise, Hos. xiii. 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

2. How endearing is the love of the Lord Jefus Christ! infinite are our obligations to him, who, to make way for the destruction of this enemy, would himself come into our room and die. He hath abolished death by submitting to it; and hath brought life and immortality to light by his gospel. How welcome should this render him to perishing sinners? and what rea-

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fon have believers to trust and triumph in him, living and dying? The sting of death is sin, unpardoned sin, and the strength of sin is the law, by its sentence binding over the sinner to suffer the pains of eternal death. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, I Cor. xv. 56, 57. The believer does not die to go to prison, but to go to his God. Christ, by dying, hath purchased heaven, and by rising again, is gone into it; assuring his disciples, that he is gone to prepare a place for them, and that he would come again, and take them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also, John xiv. 3.

'Tis no wonder, if death be that man's terror, who is to be conveyed by it to endless mifery; but what reason hath he to triumph that goes thro' the valley of the shadow of death, in faith and hope that it will be his passage to glory? Let him fear death, who is loth to be with Christ, and has no interest in him: but they may bid it welcome, who, by dying are to enter into the joy of their Lord. All things, saith the apostle to such, are yours: and he mentions death, as well as life in the number, I Cor. iii.

21, 22.

The fore-runners to death shall be fanctified; and in regard of the consequences, the day of the believer's death, is better than the day of his birth. He is born into a world of sin, and so is brought forth to sorrow as the sparks fly upwards: he dies into a world of sinless purity, and so of sulness of joy. He is born where Satan, as an adversary, continually goeth about seeking whom

whom he may devour: he dies into a world, where that wicked one can never come. He is born into a world that lies in wickedness; and when new born, whilst at home in the body, he is absent from the Lord: he dies into a world where he shall be made perfectly like God. He is born into a world, where he is not long to stay, and out of which he is to remove by a dissolution: he dies into a world, where he is to live for ever, and never cease to be, nor to be blessed for ever.

Wherefore rejoice in the happiness that these words afford you, and be ye followers of them, who thro' faith and patience have inherited the promises: ere long, you shall be with Christ and them, never to mourn, nor die more. Comfort one another with such words as these.

7 AP 53
The End of the first Volume.



